United Nations S/PV.7965

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7965th meeting
Monday, 12 June 2017, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/473)

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17-16553 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/473)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; Mr. Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Gilmour, who is joining us via video-teleconference from Washington, D.C.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/473, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): Today, the Security Council is considering the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2017/473).

This meeting is taking place at a very important point in time. It affords us an opportunity to express the international community's concern regarding the Central African Republic and ending the political and security crisis in the country. Armed violence there continues to impact millions of people. It is therefore with a heavy heart that I address the Council today, although there should be no doubt about the strength and determination of our commitment.

Our hearts are heavy and in pain following the recent wave of violence, which has once again caused so much death and destruction by scattering innumerable civilians into exile and homelessness and plunging of many families into mourning. The intensity and premeditated nature of the attacks, as well as the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, serve to remind us most horribly of the darkest episodes of the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic. However, what is both troubling and revolting is the systematic and relentless aggression against peacekeepers. I stand before the Council today, struck by the indescribable suffering inflicted on civilians, mainly by reason of their identity, and by the repeated attacks on peacekeepers.

I want to address all the victims, be they Central Africans or Blue Helmets, and especially those of the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Morocco. I once again extend to them the heartfelt tribute of the Secretary-General and the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as well as my own tribute. These painful events clearly demonstrate the depth of the Central African crisis, which reflects the structural shortcomings of the Central African State.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to give the Council a brief overview of the main developments since the publication of the report. The situation in Bangassou remains extremely precarious. The violence that erupted on 13 May, which was likely carefully planned, progressed in a disturbing fashion. Armed groups backed by political spoilers demonstrated their intention of carrying out a de facto ethnic cleansing of the town. MINUSCA is providing protection to some 17,000 internally displaced persons, 4,000 of whom are Muslims from the Tokoyo neighbourhood of Bangassou. There is also disturbing evidence of systematic targeting of ethnic Fulani. Some among the displaced community are living in deplorable conditions. Meanwhile, nearly 3,000 persons have sought refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The situations in the southern central prefectures of Ouaka and Mbomou remain complex, as reinforcements of the coalition of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique have been moving in support of the purge of the Unité pour la paix en centrafrique. The unholy alliance with some anti-balaka elements has

created an extremely volatile situation. There has been of targeting Muslim civilians in a number of towns. The end of the African Union Regional Task Force's operations is also a source of major concern, as various armed groups are competing to fill the ensuing vacuum. I also remain deeply concerned about the evolving situation in Bria, where approximately 80 per cent of the civilian population — approximately 4,000 people — have been displaced due to the clashes that began on 16 May. On 25 May, MINUSCA launched an integrated operation to create an environment that enables displaced people to return to their homes. Yet, the situation remains volatile.

Similarly, an outbreak of violence in the north-western prefectures of Ouham and Ouham Pendé, related to armed groups competing for control of lucrative transhumance roads, was averted through a tripartite local mediation initiative at the end of May, with the facilitation of MINUSCA.

The security situation in Bangui remains relatively calm, thanks to continuous and integrated political and military efforts. The joint task force in Bangui has reinforced its positions and conducted several shows of force. Coordination mechanisms between MINUSCA and relevant national defence and internal security institutions have also proven effective. At the same time, the Mission has continued to engage community leaders in support of the Government's efforts to defuse tensions.

Lately, MINUSCA has been under harsh public criticism in the Central African Republic. The accusations are in fact an expression of the frustration over the State's flagrant lack of capacities. It also reflects the population's impatience over the persistent insecurity, which is unfortunately largely self-inflicted. Sadly, much of this criticism mirrors the deep divisions that persist in the country, with each side expecting MINUSCA to fight its perceived enemy. This also shows the need to move quickly with a strong a national reconciliation agenda.

Even in the face of those cynics who would disparage MINUSCA publicly, our resolve remain stronger than ever before. As a result, the Central African Republic is on a path towards incremental peace. If we stay the course, we will come progressively closer to achieving the Mission's end state, but we must recognize that this will not be enough. We are now deeply inside a critical phase of mandate implementation, which is why MINUSCA must stay the course to consolidate progress towards peace, even as we must recognize the magnitude of the adversity we face today.

Within the United Nations, the Secretary-General has directed a redoubling of efforts in order first and foremost to help advance the political process, in combination with enhancing security efforts, increasing international engagement in response to the humanitarian crisis, boosting national reconciliation efforts and ensuring the delivery of peace dividends and a promotion of economic recovery. In this context, all constructive peace efforts need to be energized. The Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, whose last inclusive meeting took place on 8 and 9 June in Bangui, can provide an essential forum where the Government and armed groups could not only discuss the modalities of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme but also broader issues related to peace and stability in the country.

The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation remains an essential element for facilitating an inclusive national dialogue with the support of the subregion. Recent contact between the Government and the African Union and other parties are in this regard encouraging. The subregion should continue to play a critical role in ensuring that this mediation progresses and that its outcome contributes to long-term stability in both the subregion and in the Central African Republic.

The ongoing work of the Community of Sant'Egidio could represent a useful contribution to this effort. All concerned Central African parties should seize these opportunities to have discussions in good faith with the legitimate national authorities on concrete steps towards achieving sustainable peace in their country. Meanwhile, violence and the killing of innocent civilians must cease now.

MINUSCA will continue to project a robust posture towards armed groups while investing in structures that build resilience. Nevertheless, we need to be realistic about the degree to which the State may quickly achieve a level of autonomy that allows State institutions to manage by themselves, that is, without significant support. The State is without infrastructure and has limited human capital. Innovative approaches will continue to be needed to ensure stability in the medium term.

MINUSCA is, for its part, applying a fully integrated approach to preventing conflict and sustaining peace, and nowhere is this more visible than in Bambari. The town has remained calm since robust measures described in the report were taken to enable the gradual restoration of State authority, including via close coordination between the Government and the United Nations.

The report before the Council mentions other critical milestones that should not be overlooked, including the successful convening of the Consultative Follow-up Committee, in which all 14 armed groups participated. It is now incumbent upon them to generally embrace the peace process. I congratulate the Central African authorities on the timely establishment of six national institutions, as required by the Constitution, which helps the country avoid a constitutional crisis. I am also pleased to note that the National Assembly has been very productive in terms of legislation while exhibiting vibrant political activity in its first year. The Government has sent signals that it is very eager to see the Special Criminal Court fully operationalized as soon as possible and the Prosecutor of the Court arriving in Bangui on 25 May.

The joint human rights mapping report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSCA, covering the period from 2003 to 2015, was launched on 30 May. I am grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour for his visit to the Central African Republic on this important occasion. The report is an important piece in support of the fight against inpunity and makes critical yet realistic proposals with a view to advancing transitional justice in the Central African Republic. It should be seen as an important contribution to long-term stability and sustainable peace in the country.

(*spoke in French*)

At this critical juncture in the process of establishing a rule of law in a peaceful and reconciled with the United Nations and living in harmony with its neighbours, it is essential that all national and international actors working towards this noble objective speak with one and the same voice. This meeting provides an excellent example of the remarkable momentum of international solidarity that the Central African Republic is enjoying. We already had the illustration last November in Brussels. The European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the French Agency for Development and even the International Organization of La Francophonie all have developed programmes with the Central African Government. This unprecedented momentum is the bearer of rich promises. But it will be the responsibility of the Central Africans alone to ensure that they do not waste, but instead make this priceless capital grow, in order to make the legitimate aspirations of the Central African people for greater stability and shared prosperity a reality without further delay.

Mr. President, you will agree with me that the situation is critical and that, if we are not up to the task, the judgment of history will be uncompromising. A national awakening is more essential than ever. A high sense of patriotism and the unity of the Central Africans around the vital strategic objectives contained in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan are needed. The Framework for Mutual Engagement sets out the terms of the contract of trust between the Central African Republic and its strategic partners. Under the direct authority of President Touadera, the Framework for Mutual Engagement could be a major instrument of coordination and strategic direction to accelerate the implementation of the important reforms desired by the Government.

(*spoke in English*)

I am deeply concerned that the already dire humanitarian situation confronting the country is at risk of worsening if the Central African authorities cannot facilitate the return of displaced people and refugees to their homes. More than half of the Central African population — or 2.2 million people — need assistance or are food insecure. This figure represents the highest per capita caseload in the world and bears restating with ever more urgency.

It is vital that all international partners honour their pledges to the Central African Republic and harmonize that support for consolidating the peace dividends and maintaining a robust posture, which MINUSCA is of course prepared to take, with sufficient resources to enable it to achieve its mandate. Continued engagement with the international peacebuilding architecture in support of the country's stabilization and recovery is also critically important.

To that end, and with the Council's support, I pledge to continue to lead MINUSCA in expanding the limits of what peacekeeping can achieve. The Mission is working closely with United Nations agencies and

investing resources in mechanisms that promote national resilience. MINUSCA is constantly monitoring the volatile and unpredictable security situation with increased anticipation and mobility in positioning its forces to protect civilians and prevent the outbreak of widespread violence. Yet, knowing that there will be no military solution to the current crisis in the Central African Republic, all efforts must be exerted in support of a mediated political solution.

I sincerely thank the Council for recognizing the serious efforts made by MINUSCA to fight and eventually end sexual exploitation and abuse. Improvements in tracking, reporting and coordinating responses to violations are paying off in the form of better assistance to victims and a dramatic reduction in the number of new allegations. Zero tolerance works, but I will not be satisfied until there are zero cases, as well as an end to impunity for those grave abuses, including in troop- and police-contributing countries, or vis-à-vis civilian staff.

(*spoke in French*)

I understand the scope of the task we face and, I must admit that given the relentless evidence of the forces of destruction, it makes sense to think that the cynics feel vindicated, but we must recall the trajectory of the Central African Republic so that we do not get distracted or discouraged. No person or institution alone can succeed, but together there is no doubt that we will so that the Central African Republic can permanently break the vicious circle of conflict and finally, with force and conviction, embrace the greatness commensurate with its rich heritage and immense potential.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Gilmour.

Mr. Gilmour: I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update on the human rights mapping report in the Central African Republic. The report, which was mandated by the Security Council in July through resolution 2301 (2016), is nearly 400 pages long and covers the major violations and crimes committed in the country from 2003 to 2015. It was launched jointly by the Central African authorities and the United Nations in Bangui two weeks ago. I attended the launch, together with the leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The objective of the report is to help the Central African Republic authorities and the international community fight impunity for the years of massive abuses in the Central African Republic and prevent the resurgence of conflict. Our aim is also to advance the implementation of MINUSCA's core tasks to develop comprehensive transitional justice mechanisms in line with the 2015 Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation principles, to support the Special Criminal Court, and to help develop national vetting mechanisms for defence and security forces.

By documenting incidents throughout 13 years of multiple conflicts in the Central African Republic, the report constitutes the start of a process of collecting evidence of the violations committed. It details 620 incidents, including horrific accounts of entire villages being burned to the ground; multiple gang rapes of women and girls, extrajudicial killings; deaths following severe torture or ill-treatment in detention centres; serious violence against civilians on the basis of religion, ethnicity or as reprisal for perceived support for other armed groups; the recruitment of thousands of children as child fighters; and attacks on both humanitarian actors and peacekeepers. The vast majority of incidents were attributed to the ex-Séléka and the anti-balaka groups, as well as the Central African defence and security forces.

Unfortunately, some of those abuses appear to be resuming today, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has so eloquently detailed just now. That is a rather alarming development. It is therefore a timely moment to send an unequivocal message to the perpetrators of such violations — as we did through the mapping report — that their actions are being watched and carefully documented, and that they will be held accountable. During my visit, there was unanimity among the many Central Africans I spoke to regarding their utter rejection of any amnesty for perpetrators of the most serious crimes, which is in line with the principles of the Bangui Forum. Building on the momentum of the report, we hope that some of the perpetrators of the most serious violations will be arrested in the near future, which would demonstrate a true resolve to fighting impunity and is what the Central Africans are vocally demanding of us all, particularly in relation to the big fish, as they are called — those who ordered and carried out the most unspeakable atrocities.

The mapping report provides a set of recommendations to inform the prosecutorial strategy

of the Special Criminal Court, a central mechanism that will help reverse the impunity trend in the Central African Republic. I had an encouraging meeting with Special Prosecutor Muntazini Mukimapa, who recently arrived in my country. The legacy of human rights abuses in the Central African Republic is so vast that judicial mechanisms will obviously not be the only avenue to administer justice. The mapping report also provides guidance for the development of a comprehensive approach to transitional justice, which will help identify the appropriate mechanisms for truth, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence. All of that, we believe, will support reconciliation efforts, given that continued impunity is one of the primary root causes of the ongoing violence.

Finally, the mapping report also highlights essential preconditions that must be met before transitional mechanisms can be functional — measures to protect victims and witnesses and conditions to ensure that all individuals can participate in the process. Human rights defenders and leaders of women's groups and religious communities with whom I met in Bangui and Bambari have been courageously documenting human rights violations with few guarantees of security. Their courage should be matched with support from the United Nations and other international partners.

Beyond transitional mechanisms, institution-building — especially the establishment of the new National Human Rights Commission and the reform of security and defence forces to allow them to carry out their protection responsibilities — are key priorities in that regard. We are encouraged by the support of partners, particularly the African Union and the European Union in that respect.

As my visit to the severely overcrowded Ngaragba prison in Bangui made clear, rule-of-law infrastructure requires increased capacity, and prisons must be constructed and run in a more humane manner and with adequate food. That is not the case at present, a matter that I raised with the Prime Minister. While police, justice and corrections officials have begun to deploy in several parts of the country, they continue to lack many of the resources necessary to carrying out their functions. I believe we must step up efforts to build the capacity of police, justice and corrections authorities, especially in the areas most affected by the conflict. Re-establishing such services is crucial if we are to avoid fuelling further resentment.

In order to build on the positive momentum that the launch of the Mapping report has created, I really hope that the Council can support the Central Africans and MINUSCA's incredible efforts in such truly difficult circumstances by providing the means to implement its mandate to protect civilians, fight impunity and support institution-building, without which we simply cannot succeed in our common goals.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Gilmour for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Impagliazzo.

Mr. Impagliazzo (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for your invitation to address the Security Council.

The Community of Sant'Egidio, over which I have the honour of presiding and which is an advisory member of the Economic and Social Council — is an international institution that is present in more than 70 countries and has long experience in mediation and dialogue for peace all over the world, especially in Africa, starting with the General Peace Accords for Mozambique, signed in Rome 25 years ago in 1992. Sant'Egidio is itself partly African, since it has several thousand members in some 30 African countries. We have an exceptional long-standing relationship with the United Nations, with whom we have just signed an agreement in the form of an exchange of letters of intent to strengthen our collaboration in the areas of peace, conflict prevention and crisis stabilization.

The Central African Republic is a priority for Sant'Egidio, which has been involved with the country since 2003, in the promotion of peace and dialogue among its various components. I would like to briefly mention our recent initiatives, such as the November 2013 republican pact, which the Council described in resolution 2127 (2013) as

> "a credible framework to promote an inclusive national dialogue between all political, social and religious parties of the country" (*resolution 2127 (2013), para. 7*).

The Council went on to request the transitional authorities to implement it.

In line with the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, that initiative aimed to extend the authority of the State, maintain its territorial

integrity and foster the promotion and protection of human rights as well as disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR). Moreover, in 2014, Sant'Egidio worked to foster dialogue between religious communities, in particular to end the isolation to which the Muslim community was subjected after the fall of the Séléka regime. During 2015, an awareness-raising campaign was carried out for the political forces to support the electoral process and to encourage the acceptance of the election results. Sant'Egidio also facilitated Pope Francis' visit to Bangui in November 2015, and, in particular his meeting with representatives of the armed groups present in the capital at the time, by asking them to voluntarily strengthen security in the neighbourhoods that the Pope was scheduled to visit. As noted, that visit had a strong positive impact on the stability of the country and on ending the isolation of the Muslim community, and a new impetus was given to the process of national reconciliation.

Since President Touadéra's election in January 2016, all of Sant'Egidio's efforts have been aimed at enabling the democratically elected authorities to exercise their mandate throughout the country. In that regard, since November 2016, with the authorization of the Head of State of the Central African Republic, and while informing Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga, at every stage — whom I would like to commend and thank for his interesting briefing — representatives of the 14 armed groups visited Rome at various times — both those who had joined the DDRR process and those who opted out, in particular the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC).

The meetings remained confidential and did not encroach on the other consultations under way. It should be noted that sanctions were not imposed on any of the participants in the meeting in Sant'Egidio between representatives of the FPRC and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique fighting for control of Bria. In some cases, the Government of the Central African Republic itself facilitated the travel of representatives to such meetings, which are supposed to assist, support and complement the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic and its President.

That endeavour spawned a positive dynamic. In the coming days, Sant'Egidio intends to bring together representatives of all 14 armed groups and envoys of the Central African Government tasked by President Touadéra to analyse the critical points of the DDRR process and the political dialogue. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga will also be present at that meeting. It is through those meetings that the international community will be able to reap the benefits of efforts that are confidential and that are compatible with and complement other ongoing initiatives that can finalize the ceasefire and ensure that all groups take part in the DDRR process. It will be possible to work on critical points on the issue of transitional justice and on guarantees governing the access and protection of humanitarians, in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations in the Central African Republic.

Based on our experience, we believe that, first, direct dialogue between the presidency and its Government, on one hand, and the representatives of the armed groups, on the other, is absolutely necessary and a part of African ownership of the process. In that regard, the full implementation of the African mediation initiative could further assist in advancing that process.

Secondly, reaching consensus on the final terms of DDRR, restoring sovereign functions to the State and ending the isolation of institutional actors are absolutely urgent, in particular following the spate of violence in recent weeks.

To that end, the aim of the meetings is to help to rebuild trust among Central Africans, in particular non-institutional actors — the armed groups. Our experience in the field and our methods of complementarity, confidentiality, flexibility and direct dialogue have met with proven success. As underscored last Friday by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, over the years, Sant'Egidio has demonstrated

> "its ability to bring non-governmental actors and, in particular armed groups to the negotiating table".

Finally, this exercise could help break the deadlock in the national dialogue and accelerate United Nations operations as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Impagliazzo for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): First of all, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga for his comprehensive briefing. We commend the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for its tireless efforts in halting violence and protecting civilians. Its strong position against the armed groups prevented them from further expanding their control over the majority of the country. I would also like to seize this opportunity to reiterate our condolences on the loss suffered by the Mission.

I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour for his briefing. We welcome the United Nations mapping project documenting serious violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights committed in the country from 2003 to 2015. That could become an important tool for the special criminal court, which we hope will soon be fully operational.

Italy is concerned about the significant deterioration of the security situation in the country. Over the past few months, it has had a severe impact on the civilian population. It risks derailing the progress achieved over the past year. In that fragile security environment, the already dramatic humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with increasing numbers of newly displaced people and refugees.

The worsening security situation in the country proves that the political process is not moving forward. It is positive that the meeting held in Bangui in April of the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation was attended by representatives of all 14 armed groups. Nonetheless, it seems that that platform is not sufficient to stop the fighting. That is the reason that other actors have stepped in to support and complement the reconciliation process led by President Touadéra. In that regard, we welcome and commend the efforts led by Sant'Egidio, on which President Marco Impagliazzo just briefed the Council. The commitment and the process in which Sant'Egidio is involved is for us a secure point of reference for the political decision-making process.

We remain fully supportive of the African mediation initiative and we hope that in the coming weeks the African Union will be able to put in place a road map to which the Council could give voice its support. Italy believes that that is the key to ensuring close coordination of the various initiatives, bearing in mind that President Touadéra, who was democratically elected by the people last year, must remain the pivot of the Central African political scene. We therefore call on the authorities, on one side, and all the armed groups, on the other side, to step up their efforts and address the root causes of the conflict. For its part, the international community has to concretely and significantly help the Central African Government in the different sectors. In that regard, we welcome the action plan of the Secretary-General and fully support the priorities outlined by Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga.

Italy remains an active player in the humanitarian development sector through its development cooperation and supports the pledges made at the Brussels Conference. We hope that all the relevant parties will swiftly proceed with creating the conditions for pledges made at the Brussels Conference to be eventually turned into reality. In that regard, just a few days ago, the European Union and the Government of the Central African Republic signed a programme of support for the Central African Republic worth €302 million over the 2014-2020 period, by which the European Union showed a clear commitment to stepping up its support for the authorities and the people of the country.

The European Union also plays a major role in complementing the efforts of MINUSCA on the ground. The European Union's Military Training Mission in the country is providing an invaluable contribution to security sector reform. In fact, it has just completed the training of the first battalion of the Central African Republic armed forces. But any kind of international support and any discussion on the priorities for the future of the country could prove to be useless without a real political agreement, as our friends mentioned before in their briefings.

At this critical juncture for the history of the country, the Central African Republic should make an effort in the direction of long-lasting peace.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga and Mr. Impagliazzo for their briefings.

The Central African Republic has swung between consolidating the achievements made since the election of President Touadéra, in particular the recent headway made in Bangui and Bambari, and a serious deterioration in humanitarian and security conditions in other parts of the country, including deadly attacks against the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). On the latter point, we are deeply concerned about the threats against Mission staff

and the number of incidents that directly affected them. The security of MINUSCA staff should be at the centre of our attention. I also want to point out that attacks against Blue Helmets could constitute war crimes and that the perpetrators must be held accountable before the courts.

The complex state of affairs in the country reflects the many challenges that lie before the Government of the Central African Republic, in particular with regard to the development of solid national institutions and the expansion of State authority throughout the entire country. Uruguay acknowledges that the efforts made by President Touadéra and his Government in the first year of his term have paved the way for considerable progress to be made, including the establishment of various national institutions, as required under the Constitution, and headway in the ongoing dialogue with the various armed groups. With regard to that issue, we would like to underscore the convening, on 20 and 21 April, of the fourth meeting of the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, in which the 14 main armed groups participated. We encourage all armed groups to engage with the dialogue process and to use the platform to voice their claims in a peaceful way.

It is essential that the international community continue to nurture and support the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to achieve peace and stability in the country. By the same token, the action of the international community at the Brussels Conference in November 2016 constituted a clear expression of international solidarity and a commitment to learning from the lessons of the past and to not giving up. In recent months, a number of initiatives to support the peace process have taken place, including the African initiative, led by the African Union and other subregional organizations, as well as the efforts of the Community of Sant'Egidio. In that regard, for any effort to be successful, proper consultations must be held with the Government and should aim at complementing the measures that are already being made by national authorities in the search for reconciliation and peace in the country.

The implementation of MINUSCA's sexual exploitation and abuse action plan has been successful, with a decrease in the number of cases recorded. However, there is still a lot to be done in order to weed out the scourge once and for all. Uruguay reiterates its support for the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, allow me to convey my greetings to all MINUSCA staff, who day in and day out play a key role in the country. I would also like to pay tribute to the six Blue Helmets who died the line of duty as a result of cowardly attacks, which we vigorously condemn.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for his briefing. We also thank Mr. Andrew Gilmour and the representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

We share the concerns about the continuing instability in the Central African Republic, especially in the area of security. As we can see, intercommunal strife continues in the country. Criminality and banditry are widespread. There are bloody clashes taking place on religious and ethnic grounds. Intense skirmishes between armed groups continue as they fight over territory, key trade routes and resources. The situation is further complicated by the fact that State administration and security bodies are either paralysed or simply absent in many parts of the country. As was the case before, Bangui is the only island of tranquillity in the country. Clashes between non-State armed groups in the central and eastern regions of the country and insurgents' attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers not only undermine the security situation, but also impede national reconciliation.

Clearly, given such a complex military and political situation in the Central African Republic, the stabilizing role of the United Nations peacekeeping Mission cannot be overemphasized. Blue Helmets, who put their own lives at risk, are trying to put out the flames engulfing the country. We pay tribute to their heroism and their determination to help the people of the Central African Republic and to achieve peace.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that, in confronting the challenges facing the country, the Administration of President Touadéra has so far not been able to count on its own armed forces, which in fact exist on paper only. Two battalions made up of 1,500 troops will conclude their training at the end of 2017. It will take years for reliable armed forces to form in the country. The international community must pay attention to the need to strengthen the capability of

the Central African army in order to achieve lasting security in the country.

In addition, we would like to point out the need to balance the due diligence policy in the area of human rights with supporting the security sector of the Central African Republic. The task of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic is to help stabilize the country. However, without urgent reforms, the Blue Helmets will not be able to transfer responsibility to the armed forces of the country. The peacekeepers in the Central African Republic will not be there forever. We must remember that.

We are concerned about the further deterioration in the social, economic and humanitarian situation in the country and the continuing severe lack of financing for humanitarian needs. Today, the country faces another problem in the humanitarian sphere, namely, illegal armed groups who continue to attack humanitarian workers. Last year, 31 per cent of such attacks throughout the world took place in the Central African Republic. We call on all parties to the conflict to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access on the ground. On their part, the authorities should create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The Central African Republic authorities have the overarching task of getting the country's judicial bodies to function. In the circumstances it will be essential to focus on restoring national capacity. The use by peacekeepers of temporary emergency measures and the protracted process of establishing a special criminal court do not constitute a panacea for the country's problems where combating impunity is concerned. After almost two years this institution is still not functioning, and there have been serious problems with its financing. On top of that, the global experience has been that various types of courts involving international participation have generally been relatively ineffective and very costly.

We would also like to draw attention to the fact that one of the demands of the armed groups regarding a general amnesty is meeting with hostility not only from the Government — thereby delaying the national dialogue — but also from many international stakeholders. In that regard, we urge Bangui not to rush into a final decision. After all, amnesty does not imply impunity, and a promise to grant it does not devalue the achievements of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in 2015. If we are to advance the process of reconciliation and the healing of wounds, it is essential to ensure that all the parties are motivated to participate. If not, we run the risk of the conflict continuing for years.

The Central African Republic needs major reforms and modernization in every area of life. The process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation must receive extra impetus, which can be achieved only with international assistance and, most important, regional and subregional mediation. In that connection, we note the mediation efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. However, it is clear that the potential for stronger regional support for the country's national dialogue is far from being fulfilled. As we have seen from other examples of successful conflict management in Africa, it is regional mediation that to a great degree has a defining role to play in encouraging the parties to conflicts to undertake direct dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia would like to thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, for his briefing. We also thank Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, and Mr. Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio, for their valuable participation.

We are concerned about the continuing violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic, which affects not just the parties directly involved in the conflict but is also seriously harmful to the civilian population, in particular those who are most vulnerable, including women and children. It is also making the humanitarian situation even worse. In that regard, Bolivia condemns the attacks by armed groups on civilians and on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We acknowledge the difficult challenges that the country is facing in the process of restoring stability, which must be achieved through inclusive dialogue and serious, sustained commitment from the parties to the conflict.

We deeply regret the deaths of MINUSCA personnel and citizens of the Central African Republic that have

occurred as a result of the violence. We commend the work of the men and women of MINUSCA, who are fulfilling their mandate in a hostile and unstable environment. We also firmly condemn any sexual exploitation or abuse by any of the parties to the conflict, including Mission personnel. Bolivia demands that anyone accused of sexual exploitation be duly investigated by the appropriate authorities and prosecuted in accordance with the seriousness of the crime, in order to ensure that such violence does not go unpunished.

The violence in the Central African Republic has had serious humanitarian consequences. According to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 50 per cent of the population has been affected by clashes between armed groups. One in four health-care facilities have been destroyed and two out of three people have no access to health services. Food insecurity affects one in four people and a disturbing total of 2 million are now at risk. One in five people have also been forcibly displaced. In April alone more than 40,000 people were internally displaced as a result of the violence in the north-eastern and south-eastern regions of the country. According to the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/473) the total number of displaced persons increased from 401,000 in February to 426,000 in March. Violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law have exacerbated the situation. Hundreds of men, women and children have become victims of sexual violence, human trafficking or arbitrary arrest or detention. Bolivia urges all armed groups to lay down their weapons. We call on all the parties to the conflict to set aside their sectarian interests, whatever they are, in order to avoid creating obstacles to productive dialogue and to enable them to build on efforts to restore stability to the country.

In view of the difficult period that the Central African Republic is going through, which can only get worse if instability continues and peace is not established, we urge the international community to contribute to the support needed for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process for former combatants. We welcome the efforts of regional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as of neighbouring countries and the Community of Sant'Egidio, which will continue to be crucial to supporting the political initiatives for peace and cooperation aimed at a lasting reconciliation process through African solutions for Africans, in full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic. We also support the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Framework for Mutual Engagement between the Central African Government and the international community.

In conclusion, we believe that we must continue to help to lay the foundation for lasting stability in the Central African Republic and to support all relevant initiatives, with the full and committed support and agreement of the international community, based on respect for the law, justice, reconciliation and peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to commend the Bolivian presidency for conducting the work of the Security Council during its busy programme for the month of June. I commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing today, all of whose points my delegation fully endorses. I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for his briefing and the President of the Community of Sant'Egidio for all the work it is doing in the Central African Republic.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive and detailed report (S/2017/473) makes for disturbing reading with regard to the violent clashes between armed groups that have led to the serious deterioration of security conditions and have once again led to panic and the displacement of populations in most of the prefectures where those groups hold sway. We are concerned because the reach of these armed groups extends throughout our territory.

What can we add to everything that has been described in the report? I believe that it is in all of our interests, especially the Security Council's, to support the concrete and important work that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is doing under the leadership of Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. My delegation acknowledges all the support

that the Council has given our Government in its efforts to find all possible ways and means to restore peace in the Central African Republic.

Despite the increased presence of MINUSCA in the field to deter rabble-rousers, the situation remains a matter of concern. Armed groups have overtaken the entire territory. Areas that were previously spared are being deliberately attacked by these groups. Mission convoys, international forces and civilians are targeted. I offer my deepest sympathies to the brotherly and friendly countries that provide the contingents whose members have been savagely murdered or wounded. We reiterate our sincere condolences to the Governments and families of all these brave soldiers who, in saving lives, have lost their own. We thank them for their dedication to the cause of peace in an extremely dangerous, complex and difficult context. Attacks on civilians for any reason are not only unacceptable but intolerable.

I welcome the initiative of the African Union Peace and Security Council to ask the Security Council to include the issue of the disarmament of the Lord's Resistance Army in the mandate of MINUSCA. To that end, it would be highly desirable for the Mission's military strength, which currently stands at 10,471 men, with an authorized strength of 10,750, to be increased, alongside that of the police forces, to address that new task if it is approved.

Apart from all that MINUSCA has already done in the area of security, with a dynamic and muscular posture, it is time to endow it with even greater resources in order to meet the threat posed by armed groups. The presence of armed groups complicates the search for peace. I agree with the Secretary-General that we must give priority to the search for a political solution. It is in that sense that the President of the Republic continues to promote dialogue with armed groups through the vigorous action of MINUSCA that led to the participation of 14 armed groups on 14 April in the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation.

In his speech at the opening of the 4th meeting of the Committee, the Head of State proposed three key points to the participants. He told them that the killings must cease, that frank dialogue must be engaged on all issues of concern, and how the dialogue should be convened. It was in that context that His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra accepted the offer of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to endorse the African initiative for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The support of Angola, the Republic of Congo and the Republic of Chad, as well as that of international partners — in particular the United Nations, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie — are of vital importance to the search for lasting peace.

Too many crimes have been committed and continue to be committed in the Central African Republic, and the parents of the victims expect justice to be done. They are waiting for the Government to act. They also look to the United Nations and the international community. Efforts to combat impunity continue thanks to the progress made towards the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. It is gradually being set up with the appointment of most of its members. We urge brotherly and friendly countries to help us appointing the judges it still lacks.

There is one not insignificant point that I should like to bring to the attention of the Council concerning the rapid impact projects or programmes initiated by MINUSCA, such as training centres, work-for-pay programmes, income-generating projects, and so on. It is essential to make the most of all these programmes, which will employ young people who are idle and at risk of being recruited by or returning to armed groups. Unfortunately, some delegations in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly would like to see the end of funding in the MINUSCA budget for these programmes.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my sincere gratitude to the Special Representative and Head of MINUSCA and the Force Commander for their determination to carry out the mission entrusted to them — that of restoring peace in my country. Their courage is a comfort to the people who have been plagued by this interminable crisis. I welcome the excellent cooperation and understanding between the Government and MINUSCA on all issues involving the search for an end to the crisis. I pay tribute to all the men and women who participate in the Mission. I cannot fail to mention the role played in the subregion by Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in support of the Central African Republic.

I agree with the Secretary-General that time is of the essence if we want to avoid another relapse in tne Central African Republic, as many already foresee. I would therefore like to thank the international community; all the bilateral and multilateral partners of the Central African Republic that made pledges at the Brussels Conference, especially those that increased their announced pledges; as well as those that were not in Brussels and subsequently decided to support the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We do not take for granted the ongoing financial support of the Peacebuilding Fund in many projects. The Government and the people of the Central African Republic express their deep appreciation to them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7966

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7966th meeting
Tuesday, 13 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Comprehensive approach to mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my sad duty to announce the passing on 8 June of Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Miguel d'Escoto was a man of God who fought for peace in his country and region, including through our Organization.

I now invite Council members to rise to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. D'Escoto Brockman.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Comprehensive approach to mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zuev.

Mr. Zuev (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council deploys peace operations in increasingly complex and asymmetric environments. The threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices aggravate humanitarian crises and hamper emergency responses. Explosive hazards injure and kill civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, and their presence undermines the prospects for long-term sustainable peace.

(*spoke in English*)

Echoing the words of the Secretary-General, peace without mine action is incomplete peace. Mine action achieves results in the most difficult operating environments. As an integrated component of peacekeeping and special political missions, mine action is critical to the safety, security and mobility of mission personnel and to effective and efficient mandate implementation. It is also of critical importance to the protection of civilian populations, especially children and women. I will present only a few impressive examples of how this challenge is addressed by United Nations peacekeepers.

In Mali, training for peacekeepers enhances their capacity to mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and saves their lives. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, clearing explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards enables safe movement for conflict-affected communities. In South Sudan, the use of explosives detection dogs ensures that protection-of-civilian sites are free from explosive hazards. In Iraq, vast risk education campaigns and humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices allow for the safe return of displaced populations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In Colombia, mine action was one of the first items parties negotiating peace agreed and acted upon.

(*spoke in French*)

Today's debate reminds us that it is important to take account of mine action in the formulation of mandates and in renewing them. The Secretary-General's vision for the reform of the peace and security architecture is structured around a continuum from prevention to conflict resolution and from to peacebuilding and sustainable development, with strong partnerships playing a central role. Through partnerships with States, regional agreements such as the one we have with the African Union, and with civil society, mine action is able to demonstrate its operational effectiveness and its capacity for implementation through a wide range of the Organization's priorities.

With regard to conflict prevention, the depollution and destruction of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices make it impossible to access explosive materials that could be recycled and used to construct new improvised explosive devices. Reintegrating demobilized soldiers and employing individuals from affected communities in the area of mine action play a role in creating conditions conducive to peace.

(*spoke in Russian*)

As we have observed in peace processes, such as in Colombia, mine action is an effective tool that allows for the rapid and early strengthening of confidence and peace in very complex and politically sensitive environments. The strong leadership and coordination role of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) supports and promotes those achievements, as has been recognized by Member States. The role of UNMAS in the field in coordinating the work of the mine-action sector, including in complex operational environments such as in Iraq, provides a coherent, focused response, increased efficiency and cost-effective delivery.

The doctrine developed by UNMAS, through broad and comprehensive negotiations includes guidelines for reducing the threat posed to peacekeepers by the use of improvised explosive devices, which provides direction for a consistent response within the affected mission, and also includes international mine action standards used by all operators to provide safe and effective operations on a global scale.

(*spoke in English*)

In response to the call by the Secretary-General in his report on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/71/187), UNMAS is also using its expertise to coordinate the development of standards for the United Nations on the disposal of improvised explosive devices. The standards, expected to be completed by the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, will ensure conformity in training, equipment and operations. UNMAS is also taking steps to identify the building blocks for a whole-of-United Nations response to improvised explosive device threat mitigation. That has been a key area of concern, especially for troop-contributing countries.

The Security Council expects to be kept informed about threats and efforts to mitigate the threats posed by explosive hazards. I wish to assure the Council of the strong commitment of UNMAS to support the Secretary-General and the work of the Council in advancing the peace and security agenda in general.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zuev for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ochoa Niño.

Ms. Ochoa Niño (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Security Council. It is an almost indescribable experience to have the honour to be here before members to make this statement.

I have been working in mine action in Colombia for the past seven years, first with a civil-society group and now as an official of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). UNMAS in Colombia plays the critical role of technical adviser to the national mine action authority, at a moment when the negotiation, design and implementation of the Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) necessitates a functional, efficient, and effective Mine Action sector. Since 2002, the national authority — the Directorate for Integrated Action against Mines — has been leading the development of the mine action sector and the introduction of civilian humanitarian demining in Colombia.

I have seen first-hand the enormous impact and consequences that landmine and explosive remnants of war contamination have had on the lives of my fellow Colombians and on the development of my country. For that reason, it has been incredibly gratifying for me to be working with UNMAS to support the process of removing the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Seven years ago, the mine action sector in Colombia was at an early stage of development and facing the daunting task of tackling an enormous problem. Allow me to mention a few facts from that time.

Colombia ranked second worldwide in the number of victims caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war. In more recent years, Colombia has recorded fewer victims, but remains in the top five. Seven years ago, more than 50 per cent of Colombia's 32 departments recorded contamination — predominantly then, as now, in the most remote and underdeveloped rural areas. In those places, landmines serve to deny access to services, restrict mobility and prevent the use of productive land, thereby leaving little hope to them recover from poverty. Moreover, the south of the country is home to indigenous communities, who in the past were trapped and cut off due to the presence of landmines, which meant they could not walk in or out of their territory; the humanitarian aid they needed was completely blocked.

My initial assignment took me to one of the most affected districts in my country at the time. I trained the first 50 of Colombia's civilian deminers. We set up groups under my supervision that were made up of victims of the conflict, former military personnel and ex-combatants. I saw them all working together with a common goal, that is, to clear landmines and explosive remnants and thereby help communities: a genuine example of reconciliation.

Day by day, I learned that humanitarian mine action was, in so many areas of my country, key to initiating the socioeconomic reconstruction of communities. That has never been more clear than in the context of a peace process, as we in Colombia have seen.

In 2014, after many years of negotiations, the peace process was at a difficult stage and confidence levels between the Government and the FARC were at a low point. Many even feared that the process might collapse altogether. Given the circumstances, the FARC-EP agreed to participate in the Gestures of Peace process. Humanitarian demining, along with, for example, the release of child soldiers, was chosen as one of those Gestures. In that particular context, the additional benefit of the humanitarian demining initiative was that it enabled the Government and the FARC-EP to demonstrate their commitment to peace and to pursuing coexistence and reconciliation. As a result, the Colombian army and the FARC-EP began to work in cooperation, a significant milestone on the path to peace.

For more than a year, the humanitarian demining activities under the Gestures of Peace initiative constituted the sole concrete action jointly implemented by the negotiating parties. As a member of UNMAS, I had the good fortune to be invited to participate in the initiative. I was able to observe that, despite starting from a point of mistrust, along the road both the FARC representatives and the army were able to define shared terms and goals and establish coordination mechanisms to enable them to deal jointly with the challenges that arose. Ultimately, humanitarian demining as a Gesture of Peace succeeded in making mine action a key issue in the eventual Final Peace Agreement.

Anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war remain an enduring legacy of any conflict, whether or not a peace agreement has been signed. Their presence continues to have socioeconomic consequences for the people affected and is an obstacle to the large-scale delivery of humanitarian assistance and development in many areas of a country. Dealing with the problem means not just eliminating the physical threat in the soil but also setting up structures and processes that can help individuals and communities recover from the impact of mines.

In the case of Colombia, various provisions of the Peace Agreement took specific steps and defined the roles that mine action could play in that context. First, it recognizes humanitarian demining as a precondition for implementing other public policies, including those related to replacing illicit crops and the collective return of internally displaced persons. It is also fundamental to development plans. Secondly, former combatants' participation in the humanitarian-demining process can be explicitly accepted as a form of punishment within the transitional justice framework outlined in the Agreement. Thirdly, their participation is considered to be an act of reparation for the damage caused by the conflict and as a way to help to reverse its effects. Lastly, mine action is seen as a way to provide former combatants with options for economic and social reintegration and employment opportunities. It also represents a unique opportunity for the United Nations to maintain its support for affected communities, such as those in Colombia, in particular because mine-action initiatives help to promote efforts to achieve sustainable peace. This is a process that UNMAS has had an opportunity to initiate. Various kinds of demining action, for example, might contribute to disarmament activities being carried out under the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

UNMAS is supporting the relevant national authority in its development of national demining plans and in prioritizing the country's worst-affected areas. In addition, as a guarantor of international standards, UNMAS has been working on the adoption of national standards that will enable Colombia to improve the efficiency of its operations and will ensure a faster response in the communities where it is needed. We have recently had the privilege of starting to train former combatants, which will lead to the creation of a civilian humanitarian demining organization that will enable Colombia to achieve its goal of reintegrating 20 per cent of demobilized combatants.

There is a monumental challenge ahead for Colombia — the consolidation of peace in the wake of the signing of the Peace Agreement. Humanitarian mine action will be a crucial activity in helping to put a

definitive end to the violence and establish a foundation for peacebuilding and development activities for all Colombians. The Security Council has a vital role to play in ensuring that demining can contribute in other areas to improving the lives of communities affected by mines and that it can result in the benefits that are so evident in my country. I am proud to be here and working for UNMAS, as an agent for change and for strengthening mine action in Colombia. I hope that the Council will continue to ensure that Colombians can count on its support in dealing with the challenges that they face. I am grateful for the enormous opportunity to address the Council today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Ochoa Niño for her testimony and the information she has given us.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia thanks Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Operations, for his briefing, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for her briefing and for the work she is doing. We are also grateful to Mr. Vincenzo Amendola, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend Italy and its leadership for their mine action efforts.

> "I was walking normally and I stood on a rock that began to wobble. Just as I was about to jump off it so as not to fall over, the mine that was there exploded. It hurled me a distance of about 20 metres and I hit a post as I fell. I fell into that hole, looked down and realized that I had lost a leg and that the other one was hanging by a single tendon. At that moment I felt no pain. I now feel as if that pain will never go away."

That is the testimony of a 12-year-old boy who was blown up by a landmine on 7 August 2010.

> "Suddenly something exploded. I felt nothing, but I fell to the ground and saw that my brother had too. There was dust everywhere. I could not walk, and I saw that my right foot was bleeding. It has now been amputated because of a landmine. Like everyone else, I was told later that this was a residential neighbourhood that had been abandoned because it was contaminated with landmines."

That is the testimony of a 27-year-old university student named Raed.

Civilians are the chief victims of contamination by explosive hazards, particularly in post-conflict situations. Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to take the lives of thousands of people and to leave many others mutilated and disabled. Contamination by such weapons continues to have severe humanitarian consequences in many countries throughout the world. For example, according to data from the Monitor organization, the number of victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war went from 9,220 in 1999 to 3,678 in 2014, that is, from an average of almost 25 victims per day, or more than a victim an hour, to 10 a day in 2014.

Despite that decrease, however, the number of victims remains extremely high. The most concerning issue relating to these more than 3,600 victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war is that 79 per cent of them are civilians. I repeat, 79 per cent are civilian victims, innocent people who have nothing to do with the conflict, and 39 per cent of those are children, boys and girls; again, 39 per cent are children.

In 2014, in Somalia 81 per cent of the victims of mines were children, and in South Sudan the number stood at 60 per cent. It is clear that the use of such weapons is far from having been eliminated. In addition, from 1999 to 2014, more than 1,600 humanitarian deminers were killed or injured, 53 of them in 2014.

The number of victims is extremely worrying, and so is the proliferation of such explosives. In 2014, there were victims in 54 countries around the world: 18 in sub-Saharan Africa, two in the Americas, 11 in the East and South Asia and the Pacific, two in Europe and Central Asia, and 11 in North Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, in 2014 there were 57 countries with areas contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war: 12 in sub-Saharan Africa, 6 in the Americas, 12 in East and South Asia and the Pacific, 14 in Europe and Central Asia, and 13 in North Africa and the Middle East.

Although it is very difficult to calculate exactly the extent of the contamination, in 2014 alone more than 200 square kilometres were cleared of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Another consequence of this phenomenon is the contamination of entire areas in which the civilian population used to live and carry out their daily activities. As a result, many populations find their access to basic services such as water and land restricted. Land becomes unusable and access to it, and its use for agriculture, becomes impossible, including after conflicts have ended, slowing peace processes and paralysing development efforts. For this reason, people often have no other option than to flee their homes for long periods of time and to live in very precarious circumstances as a direct result of the threat posed by such explosives, swelling the number of internally displaced persons and refugees and further complicating their return once the conflict has ended. The harm and destruction caused to civilian infrastructure such as water-delivery and sanitation systems increases the risk of the spread of disease.

Although the civilian population is the chief victim of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs, humanitarian staff, both of the United Nations and of other organizations, and peacekeepers are also victims of these devices. In 2015 alone, we recorded 38 direct attacks using IEDs against civilian humanitarian staff and United Nations peacekeepers. This means that such personnel are not only exposed to this threat but also prevented from being deployed effectively so that they can discharge their mandate.

Mine action does not, therefore, have just a humanitarian aspect; it is also crucial for the forging of a lasting and sustainable peace. It is not possible to achieve effective piece without including mine action in the mandates that require it. It is on the basis of this understanding that we wish to underscore the work of and the role played by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the coordination of demining efforts in the 18 peacekeeping operations and special political missions in which it is operating. The work it carries out in terms of mine clearance, education and victim assistance is key for the building of lasting and sustainable peace processes. Here I would reiterate that in any conflict in which landmines were used and explosive remnants of war remain, it will not be possible to achieve a sustainable and lasting peace without mine action.

Bolivia is a pacifist State that does not manufacture, stockpile or use landmines. We have signed and ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We call upon all States that have not yet signed these Conventions to accede to them, and we appeal to all States parties to the Treaty fulfil their commitments thereunder.

It is against this backdrop that two weeks ago Bolivia submitted a draft resolution that is currently being negotiated. We would like to thank all delegations for their positive input to the draft, and we hope to continue to work towards an eventual adoption thereof in the coming days. Bolivia firmly believes that this draft resolution, once adopted, will set a very positive precedent recognizing the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, as well as the importance of mine action for peacekeeping and for international peace and security.

I would like to conclude my statement by quoting the preamble to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, popularly known as the Ottawa Convention. A total of 162 States are party to it; it is one of the cornerstones of mine action around the world and of future treaties in the same area. The preamble states:

> "The States Parties,
>
> "Determined to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, that kill or maim hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians and especially children, obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement" (*General Assembly resolution 52/38*).

This is one of the responsibilities of the Security Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): At the outset, let me thank Bolivia for bringing this important topic to the attention of the Council. We look forward to the discussion on the draft resolution, which will provide a possible outcome for our debate. As has been mentioned, the indiscriminate harm caused to civilians as well as to peace and security by anti-personnel mines

and explosive remnants of war remains a matter of great concern.

In this regard, I would like to thank Mr. Alexander Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their reports, which give us a complete and comprehensive overview of the situation. Indeed, while mine action has been crucial in helping communities recover from conflicts or receive humanitarian assistance during conflicts, ongoing events are generating new areas of contamination that may deny civilians access to their basic requirements. In that respect, let me recall that countries affected by mines are mostly middle- and low-income countries. Most of the victims are innocent civilians and often children, which is our primary concern.

We are looking at the expanding range of the threats to civilian populations. I am referring, for instance, to the increasing use of new devices, such as improvised explosive devices, particular by non-State armed groups, as well as to the risks posed by unsecured weapons and ammunition stockpiles located in populated areas. As Mr. Zuev mentioned in reference to Iraq, and as I personally saw with the Carabinieri, there are certain implications of fighting those new devices in order to rid the country of threats. Similarly, we are seriously concerned about the recent indication that the number of people killed or injured by mines and other explosive remnants has been on the rise. Unfortunately, that trend has been accompanied by signs of decreasing funding devoted to mine action.

Against that background, we shall remain vigilant, even within and through this Council. In that regard, we commend the United Nations Mine Action Service and the other United Nations entities involved in mine action for their remarkable and professional work in an increasingly complex environment. Their work is also open to the involvement of civil society, which, of course, is creating cooperation between our entities and the civil mobilization through that process. We value the coordinating efforts deployed by UNMAS and the progress made on the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. Italy will continue to support such efforts through our current chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group.

We will maintain our commitment to mine action with regard to each of its five pillars — demining and clearance, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy, inter alia, against the use of antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions. As party to all the legally binding instruments relevant to mine action, including the Oslo Convention, the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, Italy strongly encourages all States to join them. Those instruments set high standards for mine action and they will universally mark clear progress.

To conclude, I would like to add my voice in acknowledging that mine action is an essential step for an effective humanitarian response, a precondition for the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and a prerequisite for reconstruction and development, including for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For the reasons I just listed, we stand ready to do our part.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to express my appreciation for the Bolivian Presidency for organizing today's debate on mitigating the threats posed by landmines and other explosive hazards.

As it has been more than a decade since the Security Council pronounced itself on the issue, we welcome the discussion, as well as the draft resolution put forth by Bolivia on a comprehensive approach to mine action. It is indeed fitting that today's meeting is taking place at a time when the twentiethth anniversary of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the leading United Nations entity that coordinates and implements all aspects linked to the mitigation of the threats arising from mines and explosive remnants of war, is being celebrated. We thank Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alexander Zuev, and Ms. Natalie Ochoa Niño for their respective briefings.

International humanitarian law puts limits on parties to an armed conflict when their means and methods of warfare that could cause unnecessary suffering. Only acts that are proportional to the lawful objective of a military operation and necessary to achieve that objective are allowed. International humanitarian law also requires parties to an armed conflict to take necessary precautions when using landmines. That is aimed at minimizing their indiscriminate effects in armed conflicts. As such, parties must record their placement of landmines as well as they possibly can, as well as remove or otherwise render them harmless to civilians or facilitate their removal of the end of active hostilities.

That notwithstanding, the continued use of anti-personnel mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as well as the number of civilian casualties from the use of such weapons with indiscriminate impacts and explosive remnants of war, are indeed sources of concern. As a country that has suffered from the impact of landmines and other explosive devices for several decades, Ethiopia attaches great importance to mitigating the impact of landmines accordingly. Ethiopia has ratified the relevant international legal instruments and has been actively engaged in mine action and clearance.

The need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at addressing the threat and impact of mines and unexploded ordnance has long been recognized by the Security Council, since its presidential statement S/PRST/2003/22, adopted in 2003, which could help integrate stockpile destruction, mine clearance, victim assistance, awareness creation, as well as the need to work towards the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction certainly provides an important international framework for addressing the problem of landmines. In addition, we believe that the resolution just adopted sends a strong signal regarding the need to mitigate the threats posed by landmines and other explosive hazards and promote peacebuilding and stabilization. It will also reinforce the implementation of existing to international legal instruments and enhance cooperation between and among Member States, including through the sharing of knowledge and experience in mine action.

Peacekeepers continue to play a critical role in mine action, particularly in demining-related activities. As a major troop-contributing country, the use of IEDs in recent years against peacekeepers by armed groups in asymmetrical warfare is a source of great concern to us. Strengthening the responding capacities of peacekeepers to the threat posed by mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war would require the Security Council to renew its commitment to mine action and enhance the capacity of peacekeepers to address the threats arising from mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war through the provision of adequate and sustained support, including when authorizing the deployment of missions and renewing their mandates.

In conclusion, I would like to end my statement by affirming our commitment to work towards a comprehensive approach that could enable us to prevent or limit the damage and suffering caused by mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay thanks the Bolivian Presidency for having organized today's informative meeting, as well as for circulating the concept note and putting forth today's draft resolution. Due to today's meeting being on a topic of particular importance for the maintenance of international peace and security, it requires our attention. We would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alexander Zuev, for his briefing, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia. I would like to congratulate her for the work she is doing and for her very eloquent briefing.

Uruguay, commensurate with its long-standing pacifist philosophy, is a country deeply committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and advocates for strengthening multilateralism as part of its efforts to promote universal and complete disarmament. In line with the this, Uruguay has signed and ratified the relevant existing regional and international treaties for such purposes.

We all know that anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war are responsible for countless victims in various conflicts, many of which continue to rage. Every year, these weapons kill or injure thousands of people, without making a distinction between civilians and combatants, and imperil the lives of those living in the affected areas and limit the local populations' access to basic services. A large number of civilians die or suffer injuries from these weapons, even long after the end of armed conflict. Of particular note is the risk of unexploded remnants of war explosives to children, who are the most vulnerable victims in conflict situations.

In the light of the foregoing, it is essential that we strengthen the regulatory framework prohibiting the use of anti-personnel mines and spare no effort to universalize the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. In that regard, Uruguay would urge States that have not signed the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible, in

particular those States that currently manufacture and sell such weapons. Similarly, Uruguay encourages all Member States to comply fully with their international obligations and uphold their existing commitments under international law pertaining to disarmament and non-proliferation.

The regulation of the arms trade and the implementation of existing instruments are crucial if we are to avoid the consequences suffered by civilian victims of armed violence and if we are to promote international peace and security. As the Secretary-General points out in his most recent report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2017/414), commitment to conflict prevention compels us to address the illicit and irresponsible transfer of weapons as such transfers make armed conflict possible and jeopardize efforts to protect and build peace. For that reason, the ratification of, and accession to, international instruments intended to protect civilians, such as the historic Arms Trade Treaty, will make a major contribution to protecting civilians from harm.

With regard to mine action within peacekeeping operations, Uruguay wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by the United Nations in affected areas. We also wish to convey our gratitude and appreciation to the agents and institutions that work to clear out landmines and remnants of war explosives and to mitigate the impact of these arms on people's lives.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that, if we are to end the suffering of thousands of people caused by these weapons, we must secure the commitment and determination of the entire international community to eliminate them, because the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor is unacceptable.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for convening today's important debate and for its resolution on mine action, in which France is actively participating. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for their very illuminating briefings.

The threats posed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as the ongoing use of cluster munitions, are a serious and major concern in today's world. That is further compounded by numerous challenges posed by the growing use of improvised explosive devices with an ever-increasing death toll. Recent news of incidents in Mali, where we have all already been hard hit, has been particularly notable. But this worrisome observation applies in fact wherever civilians, local forces and troop-contributing countries are confronting this scourge of modern conflict on a daily basis. These weapons can kill and maim right away or at a later date, randomly striking long after they have been laid. They make no distinction between civilians and troops.

Given this extremely acute threat, we have moral and legal obligations — not just an obligation related to security concerns — with respect to the populations we must protect, the personnel we deploy, and the host States with which we collaborate. I am also thinking of the first teams on the ground — the civil and military mine-clearance experts. I would like to pay tribute to them for their ongoing and unstinting commitment as they risk their lives. What they do is key because it saves lives every day, not only by protecting civilians from these weapons, but also by creating the security conditions for Blue Helmets to be deployed and humanitarian personnel to reach populations in need.

Anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices form a complex whole. The presence of mines in residential and cultural areas, the spread of unexploded ordnance, and entrapment by improvised explosive devices are particular challenges. To address them, we must garner specific expertise and resources. As in many other fields, there can be no one single response, but rather a series of tailored, distinct but complementary measures whose consistency must be maintained and strengthened.

We should first provide actors on the ground, be they troops or deployed forces, with the operational means necessary for their action. Specialized non-governmental organizations should also be supported, as they work tirelessly in extremely dangerous areas. New technologies must play a role in foreseeing and mitigating threats. Accordingly, I would like to commend all of the Secretariat's innovative initiatives in this area. I would also like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the United Nations Mine Action Service, under the particularly effective and dynamic leadership of Agnès Marcaillou, together with other United Nations bodies.

We also have a major responsibility in terms of assistance, particularly in the areas of training and awareness-raising. It is indeed important to let susceptible countries to build their own know-how,

so that they do not have to depend on that of others. That also means stepping up our education efforts to improve local populations' understanding of risks. Such prevention efforts are an essential part of our work and should be part of the clearing and security programmes undertaken to protect the civilian populations.

In that context, France's efforts focus in particular on supporting the security sector reform in various partner States. We support the training of national bodies and provide assistance to non-governmental organizations deployed in relevant countries. Like Handicap International, these non-governmental organizations are doing an admirable job. In order to ensure stability, France, working in an essentially humanitarian framework, supports specialized training in a number of post-crisis countries. We also support demining programmes, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, in close cooperation with our partners. For example, we support such regional initiatives as the Development Centre for Post-Conflict Operations in Mine Clearance and Decontamination in Benin.

However, operational activities cannot simply be the sum of individual efforts. The complexity of the threat requires multiple stakeholders engaging in a coordinated response, based on the diversity of expertise and respective means. The Mine Action Support Group, currently chaired by Italy, is an excellent example of this. France also works closely with the European Union and the main non-governmental organizations involved.

Bolstering our resources on the ground will finally be coupled with the need to ensure the universalization and the full implementation of the legal tools at our disposal. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction comes to mind as a reference instrument for combating anti-personnel mines, as does the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed in Oslo, which bans cluster munitions. Many countries today share the same objectives as those conventions, even if they are not yet signatories. And some are considering becoming signatories, which we must encourage and facilitate.

In the face of ever-increasing casualties due to such weapons, time is short. We are duty-bound morally, politically and legally to intensify our efforts and strengthen their coherence so as to minimize the bloodshed caused by those deadly devices. I pledge France's full support.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Mr. Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their vivid briefings. I want to thank you in particular, Mr. President, for bringing this issue before the whole of the Security Council. It is an issue that we seldom discuss, but one that has an impact on conflict after conflict ever since the United Nations came into existence. Sadly, that impact is still being felt in too many places today.

To simply treat this issue as any other on our agenda would be a mistake. Anti-personnel landmines are nothing short of indiscriminate killers. They do not recognize sides in conflict; they recognize no age or affiliation.

I am proud to represent a country that wants to see an anti-personnel-mine-free world. In 1995 our predecessors sat around this table and unanimously adopted resolution 1005 (1995), which recognized the global threat posed by those devices. At the time we focused on Rwanda and a select group of countries. Two years later, Princess Diana walked the streets of Cuito, Angola, greeting children affected by the scourge of landmines. She spoke with the survivors and saw the human face of an epidemic, a man-made epidemic, that took the form of a 100 million mines scattered throughout more than 70 countries. Twenty years ago, landmines claimed a new victim every 20 minutes.

That was the state to play two decades ago. In the face of what seemed to be insurmountable odds, we collectively said then that this must end. Later that year, we came together as Governments, civil society and survivors from around the world to channel momentum and agree to a treaty banning antipersonnel mines.

Twenty years later, we have undoubtedly come a long way, but 2015 showed what is at stake if we take our foot off the accelerator. That year saw a 75 per cent increase in casualties compared to 2014, and it was the most deadly year on record since 2006. That marked increased was largely due to the increase in the use of improvised anti-personnel mines by non-State armed groups in the Middle East. What is worse is that of the 6,461 people killed or injured that year, more than one in three was a child.

The thousands who lost life and limb do not tell the full story. Millions more are forced to live alongside land littered with anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. By virtue of their very existence, livelihoods are put at risk. They prevent children from attending school; they prevent

farmers from growing crops to feed their communities; they prevent humanitarian aid from reaching those in need; and they make the journey home impossible for refugees.

It is for all those reasons that the United Kingdom announced in April that we would be increasing our support for anti-mine action. We announced more than $125 million for the United Kingdom Global Mine Action Programme over the next three years. Those funds build on the existing $38 million that our Department for International Development has already pledged. They will be used to clear 150 square kilometres of lands of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war

Because of those projects, 800,000 people will no longer live under the threat of landmines, and 100,000 people will receive education on the dangers they pose. The United Kingdom is also making significant progress towards meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in order to demine the Falkland Islands after we announced a new $25 million programme phase in September last year, which we are implementing now.

We are focusing our efforts on the countries where we can make the biggest impact, where the greatest number of people live in the shadow of explosive remnants of war. By the end of the three years, Afghanistan, Somalia and South Sudan, will be among the countries that have benefited from this United Kingdom-sponsored project.

Sadly, this will not be enough. Sixty countries and four territories are still contaminated with landmines. Nearly a dozen of those have more than 100 square kilometres that have been forfeited to mines. Landmines are still destroying opportunity and hope. If we are to restore that hope, we must come together again as we did 20 years ago. Ending mines will require money, education and survivor assistance. We call on each and every Government that will speak in the Chamber today to play that part.

As conflicts subside today, the explosive remnants of war do not. Landmines respect no ceasefire; they respect no peace agreement. In any given week, the Council discusses the need to end violence, conflict and war in some part of the world. If we do not tackle the global scourge of landmines, we are putting those who have emerge from conflicts even further behind.

Twenty years ago, we showed the collective action was possible. Now it is time to finish the job.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Against the backdrop of the proliferation of asymmetric conflicts, Senegal commends the Bolivian presidency for holding a briefing on a topic that is so important to international peace and security — demining.

I would like to thank our briefers today, Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia, for their instructive briefings.

Ms. Ochoa Niño explained why humanitarian demining was a precondition for peace, reconciliation and development and a real turning point for the Colombian Final Peace Agreement, which her country signed.

Since the adoption, 20 years ago, of the the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, otherwise known as the Ottawa Convention, significant efforts have been made to combat anti-personnel mines — as evidenced by the accession of 162 Member States to that Convention. Senegal is one such State. Despite the mobilization of the international community, those explosive devices continue to be a genuine threat to international peace and security, in particular in a context of a growing number of non-State actors, such as terrorist groups.

Even more concerning, as mines get cheaper because they are easy to produce, their removal becomes exponentially more expensive — with a devastating impact on the socioeconomic development of contaminated areas. Since Senegal incorporated the Ottawa Convention into its domestic laws and implemented relevant institutional mechanisms, it subsequently destroyed its stockpile of anti-personnel mines between 2000 and 2004. Since then, my country has continued to ask countries that produce such weapons to demonstrate greater political will in limiting their manufacture in line with the goal of the total destruction of such weapons and explosives. With the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, a humanitarian demining programme has been

launched in southern Senegal with a view to removing landmines from the entire area in order to ensure the effective return of the population to the area and the resumption of economic activities in a region with vast economic potential.

From 2008 to date, thanks to the Senegalese National Mine Action Centre, an area of more than 1.8 million square metres spanning four communities has been completely demined. Similarly, Senegal focuses all the required attention on other important aspects of humanitarian demining that are elements of mine action, including risk-reduction education, advocacy, assistance to victims and the destruction of stockpiled mines. With regard to the astronomical costs of demining efforts, the Government of Senegal has decided to earmark a portion of its budget every year to that important endeavour. It will not be sufficient, however, and that is why we require the support of our partners in order to remove all anti-personnel mines by 2021.

Since its entry into force in August 2010 with 101 States parties and 18 State signatories, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has enjoyed the growing support of the international community, which has fully taken note of its legal and moral accountability in attaining a world free of cluster munitions. It should be recalled that those weapons have reprehensible traumatic and psychological effects on civilian populations. We are pleased to state that, in the same spirit that inspired the parties to the Ottawa Convention, African countries, including my own, play a key role in the implementation of this international legal instrument. In that regard, Senegal, which does not possess such weapons and is committed to honouring its obligations, along with its international partners, will continue to raise awareness among other States in order to make the Convention on Cluster Munitions universal, as it is essential to international peace and security, and in particular the protection and dignity of civilians.

As a major contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Senegal commends the attention paid to the threats posed by landmines, the explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and cluster munitions in the context of discharging mission mandates. Similarly, my country commends the fact that this dimension is under consideration by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. The use of such weapons, in particular by non-State actors, such as terrorist groups, in a volatile and unpredictable environment similar to that in which the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali operates, is an additional challenge to peace soldiers.

We take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts of the United Nations, and in particular of the United Nations Mine Action Service, through cooperation, capacity-building and technical assistance to achieve a world free of such explosive devices, which are responsible for the indiscriminate killing of children and adults, civilians and military personnel.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms its readiness to work with the other members of the Security Council to make a positive contribution to the relevant draft resolution that your country, Sir, has submitted for its consideration.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to all the innocent civilians who have been killed or maimed by explosive hazards. I would also like to applaud all those working towards demining, including today's excellent briefers, for their courage and professionalism.

Twenty years ago, in 1997, the momentous Ottawa Convention was opened for signature. Since then, we have seen significant advancements, including the steady destruction of stockpiles and progressive decreases of minefields in most of the affected countries. However, as we face global crises, such as the rise in violent extremism and terrorism, the threat of explosive hazards is far from declining. According to Landmine Monitor, the number of landmine victims jumped from 3,700 in 2014 to 6,500 in 2015, and the United Nations is calling for a 50 per cent increase in funding for mine action from $347 million in 2016 to $511 million in 2017. The needs are greatest in active conflict zones, such as those in the Middle East and it must be our shared concern. The fundamental challenge here is how to implement concrete actions in conflict situations.

Humanitarian actions cannot be undertaken without mine action, nor can displaced people return to their homes. Mine action is therefore a prerequisite for peace and security. In parallel with the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, strengthening the national capacities of affected countries should be our primary target. In addition to demining, providing victim assistance and risk-reduction education to affected communities is critical to making peace and stability sustainable. Based on those ideas, Japan

keeps contributing to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the United Nations Mine Action Service. We believe that it improves the humanitarian situation around the world, especially in the Middle East region, including Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and enhances the resilience of local communities.

Japan has long made assistance to mine action one of its priorities, and we are proud to be the second-largest contributing country, with total cumulative contributions from 2011 to 2015 amounting to $263 million. I should like to take this opportunity to share several lessons learned from our own experiences, which might be useful in terms of mine action.

First, we recognize that triangular cooperation deserves to be promoted. Assistance to Cambodia has been our longest commitment in that field. Based on the knowledge and experience yielded from such cooperation, Japan and Cambodia are now expanding triangular technical cooperation with Colombia, Angola and Laos through the Cambodian Mine Action Centre.

Secondly, a wide range of partnerships is of great importance. Japanese private companies and civil society organizations are involved in collective efforts. For example, a high-tech clearance machine, produced by a Japanese company, is capable of crushing cluster munitions with its specialized bucket, and that company lends machines to a non-governmental organization for its activities in Laos.

Thirdly, gender mainstreaming should be highlighted. There is no question that women's participation enhances the quality of those activities. That is particularly true when it comes to approaches to women, children and victim assistance strategies. Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño's accomplishments are a perfect testimony to it.

In 2014, we set a political goal to realize a landmine-free world by 2025 under the framework of the Ottawa Treaty. To achieve this goal, the international community still has a lot to do. Japan will continue to play an active role in mine action in collaboration with the United Nations, Member States, private companies and civil society organizations.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their very informative briefings today. We, too, would like to extend our appreciation to those brave individuals and organizations that put their lives on the line to mitigate landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance in conflict-ridden areas. We hope that today's discussion will help us continue to highlight the importance of humanitarian mine action, countering the threat of improvised explosive devices and mitigating the danger of explosive remnants of war.

The United States has been the world's single largest financial supporter of such efforts. We have provided more than $2.8 billion in such aid since 1993 in more than 99 countries for conventional weapons destruction, which includes the clearance of my landmines and unexploded ordnance, including in Colombia where we are the largest donor in the sector. We urge other Member States to join us in a robust international partnership to reduce the humanitarian impact of landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices on vulnerable communities around the world.

Today public and private sector organizations are playing a vital role in clearing IEDs and other explosive devices often before conflict and violence have completely ceased. These partners will continue to provide essential support to ease the safe return of civilians in areas where fighting has taken place.

Nowhere are these challenges more prevalent than in our ongoing efforts to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). Many of the areas that have been liberated or are in the process of being liberated from ISIS are severely contaminated with landmines and IEDs. Some of these explosive devices operate as booby traps meant to spread terror even after ISIS fighters have departed. An important part of defeating ISIS involves clearing these landmines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance so internally displaced persons and refugees can return to their homes. This also involves ensuring key infrastructure points are free of landmines and IEDs so that water service can be restored and sanitation services resumed.

However, there remains the potential for confusion about the role of humanitarian mine action implementers and military and security personnel who are operating in evolving conflict areas to mitigate IEDs. In order to best protect mine action personnel, it is important that Member States not conflate IED clearance with military counter-IED activities. Affected States, donors, the United Nations and humanitarian mine action implementers should work together to make sure

that all personnel searching for and disposing of IEDs have the appropriate skills to do the job. The aim should be to ensure the safe, effective and efficient disposal of IEDs.

The United States will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and others to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of landmines, unexploded ordnance and IEDs.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their briefings.

In recent years, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community, progress has been made in the area of international mine action. The harrowing problem of landmines has been mitigated in some countries and regions. China appreciates the efforts undertaken by the United Nations in this area.

At present, the international and regional security situation is undergoing complex and profound changes. In many countries and regions affected by war or armed conflict, landmines and explosive remnants of war pose a serious threat to civilian lives and property and impede economic development and social reconstruction. In recent years, improvised explosive devices have become a means for terrorists and extremists to carry out their acts of terrorism and violence.

Strengthening international assistance and cooperation in mine action and effectively reducing the threat of landmines and other explosives to civilians and peacekeepers is an important task. China believes that to effectively address the humanitarian concern arising from landmines and other explosives, the international community should observe the following principles.

First, we must adhere to the principle of ownership by Member States. It is imperative to fully take into account the national conditions and needs of the landmine-affected countries and continuously improve the capacity and level of the affected countries participating in demining in order to fully leverage their role.

Secondly, we must uphold the principle of balanced treatment. It is important to respect the differences among countries in terms of security environments and military strength by both properly addressing the humanitarian concerns and fully taking into account the legitimate national military and security needs.

Thirdly, we must uphold the principle of results-orientation. It is important to focus on improving the practical results of demining assistance and cooperation, improving the capacity-building of recipient States and promoting a transition from their reliance on external assistance to self-reliance as to the mainstay.

China has always paid great attention to the humanitarian concerns associated with landmines and actively supported international legal instruments, including the Geneva Convention and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). China is a full member of CCW and its five additional protocols. We faithfully fulfil our obligations under those instruments.

For many years, China has maintained close exchanges and cooperation with the contracting parties of Ottawa Convention on Landmines and has participated as an observer in the Meetings of States parties and its review conferences. It also participated in the actual Conference of the Convention. China is actively committed to the international humanitarian demining assistance cause and has, to the best of its ability, provided assistance to the affected countries and victims. Since 1998, the Chinese Government has provided assistance in the forms of demining equipment and technology training, as well as donations. It has also provided humanitarian assistance worth more than ¥90 million to nearly 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It has trained nearly 500 professional demining technicians.

In September 2015, Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping announced at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, during the seventieth session of the General Assembly, that China would in the next five years launch 10 demining assistance programmes. At present China, is actively honouring this commitment and implementing the related programmes.

China attaches great importance to the humanitarian concerns arising from the abuse of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by non-State actors. We support the discussion of IEDs within the framework of the amended landmine protocol to CCW. We are ready for a useful exchange of views with the parties concerned. Chinese experts and the United Nations, among others, jointly formulated the United Nations

IED disposal standards and co-hosted the first Meeting of the Group off Experts last March in Beijing.

China fully understands the aspirations of landmine-affected countries and peoples for security and development. We are ready to fulfil our international obligations, as always, and provide assistance to the best of our ability. We are ready to join the international community in addressing the humanitarian concerns arising from landmines and other explosive devices.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We appreciate Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zuev's first but nonetheless substantive and multilingual briefing, and listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) staffer in Colombia.

With the increasing numbers of hotbeds of tension and local conflicts, it is not just the problem of finding political settlements for them that is becoming particularly acute, but also the importance of intensifying the international community's efforts to deal with their most immediate consequences, such as unexploded mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. This is a global issue, one of the most significant obstacles not only to returning refugees and temporarily displaced persons to their homes but also to restoring the overall infrastructure and economy of post-conflict regions. It also represents a serious threat to United Nations peacekeeping forces, which just since 2014 have lost 21 personnel killed and 105 injured as a result of incidents involving explosive objects. In that regard, we fully share the opinion of Secretary-General Guterres that peace without mine action is an inferior peace.

The Russian Federation considers coordinating role of UNMAS in the United Nations system very important. We intend to continue supporting its efforts to develop standards, best practices and recommendations for mine action and are ready to participate in the third expert meeting on the development of standards for the disposal of improvised explosive devices. Just as important as the theoretical efforts of UNMAS is its applied work, which is done within the framework of existing United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We also attach importance to the help it provides to requesting States, on a voluntary basis, in order to achieve qualitative improvements in their national demining capacities. It is ultimately Governments that have to bear the primary responsibility for ensuring their peoples' safety, including from terrorist attacks. In 2014, under the auspices of its Ministry of Defence, the Russian Federation created an international mine action centre as its national contribution to international mine action. Its work is guided by international United Nations standards as well as national ones, on the basis ofwhich it trains specialists in humanitarian mine clearance.

I would also like to draw attention to the urgent need for the international community to step up demining efforts in Syria, representing a pledge to return refugees and temporarily displaced persons to their homes as quickly as possible. The Russian Federation recently initiated efforts to form a broad international coalition for mine action in Syria, and Russian servicemen are already working actively on demining the country's territory. We hope that our partners will be able to contribute to the best of their ability to solving this humanitarian problem.

The Russian Federation is ready to work productively on the draft resolution proposed by the Bolivian delegation, which we believe has the potential to provide UNMAS with practical help in fulfilling its mandate.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking Bolivia for putting mine action on the Council's agenda today. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zuev for his useful briefing and, especially, Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for her passionate and inspiring statement this morning.

The terrible legacy of landmines and explosive remnants of war in the communities where they are found cannot be overstated. Families returning from the displacement caused by conflict find that the land that once sustained them has now turned against them. The presence of landmines undermines returnees' ability to grow and harvest crops for food or sale, undermining health and livelihoods, and holds an even worse threat, that of death or injury.

In the 20 years since the Ottawa Convention was drawn up, impressive progress has been made in the fight to end the use of landmines. It is a positive development that casualties from landmines have fallen in the past few years, in a reflection of the almost total elimination of the use of anti-personnel mines, thanks to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as progress in efforts to make previously mined areas safe for use. However, that work is far from finished.

The number of casualties of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has risen sharply, a development that is largely attributable to the use of IEDs in conflict and post-conflict areas, particularly by non-State actors. Every effort must be made to mitigate the threat that IEDs pose to individuals and communities. We welcome the ongoing work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II that is designed to enable us to share experiences regarding the humanitarian problems posed by IEDs and to learn about national, regional and international efforts to prevent their use.

Sweden fully shares the concerns that have been expressed about the serious humanitarian problems caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war in post-conflict areas. We must step up our efforts to minimize the occurrence, effects and risks of this threat. Children are particularly vulnerable. The landmark Graça Machel report (A/51/306), which led ultimately to the United Nations mandate on children in armed conflict, noted that landmines represent an insidious and persistent danger to children. Children, who are naturally curious, are likely to pick up strange objects and, deplorably, some landmines have even been designed to be toy-like. Children are also far more likely than adults to die from mine injuries. Their needs should therefore always be at the forefront when mine-awareness and physical-rehabilitation programmes are being designed.

The task of clearing the explosive remnants of war is often dangerous and painfully slow, but the effects of humanitarian mine clearance on communities can be transformative, as we heard this morning from Ms. Ochoa Niño. It is therefore important to ensure that support for mine action, including through funding and expertise, is maintained. Sweden has contributed more than $100 million to mine action worldwide over the past decade. In addition to financing, technical assistance is also an important aspect of mine action. Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency is a partner of UNMAS and the International Committee of the Red Cross and conducts humanitarian mine action worldwide. Through UNMAS, for example, we recently supported mine-action activities in Somalia aimed at minimizing the impact of explosive hazards, building national explosive management capacity and enabling the African Union Mission in Somalia to fulfil its mandate with greater safety and freedom of movement.

More broadly, Sweden believes in an approach to disarmament and international security that puts human beings at the centre of our policy. Sweden is a State party to all conventions relevant to the banning or regulation of the use of non-controllable mines, anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and the handling of explosive remnants of war. We believe that continuing to work to universalize those conventions is the most effective way to counter the risks associated with the use of such weapons.

In conclusion, a commitment to international frameworks, as well as well-resourced and effective mine-action programmes, will not only save lives but will also enable those who have survived the ravages of war to begin rebuilding their lives.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to express my appreciation to the Bolivian delegation and to you personally, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and raising such an important topic in the Security Council. I also thank Mr. Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their informative briefings.

Ongoing conflicts and military activities in States affected by instability are resulting in the contamination of new territories by explosive remnants of war. Improvised explosive devices are increasingly being used by illegal armed and terrorist groups and pose a significant threat to communities recovering from conflict. That is why mine action remains essential in enabling an effective humanitarian response, the protection of civilians and freedom of movement for communities, humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers.

Ukraine attaches great importance to these issues and in recent years co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions on assistance in mine action and on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. We also supported the General Assembly resolutions on the Ottawa Convention and on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

As a State party to these two Conventions, Ukraine acknowledges their fundamental character in minimizing the risks stemming from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Despite the current significant challenges in the security field caused by the hybrid war waged against Ukraine, we are fully complying with our obligations under these treaties. Indeed, since 2014, the issue of

mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation has acquired a whole new meaning for my country. The explosive hazard threat is a direct result of the foreign armed aggression and offensive actions carried out by the hybrid Russian-terrorist forces operating in some areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Mines and explosive devices are scattered throughout the conflict area, especially along the contact line, and pose a severe threat to civilians, including children. During the period from 16 February to 15 May, 36 civilians died and 157 were wounded in Donbas. This represents a 70 per cent increase over the same period of the previous year. In 40 per cent of cases, people died as a result of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Such explosive remnants of war are often planted by illegal armed groups in residential areas and along communication routes, thus posing a greater threat to the civilian population than to military personnel. Recently a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine fell victim to one of these devices when a patrol car carrying OSCE personnel was blown up on 23 April near the city of Luhansk.

Unfortunately, the Security Council statement condemning this horrible incident was blocked by the Russian delegation, which is very telling with respect to the perpetrators of this crime and their Kremlin patrons.

It is in these extremely difficult circumstances that Ukraine is taking all possible measures to destroy and dispose of explosive remnants of war on its territory. The State emergency service of Ukraine and other national authorities, in close cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNICEF, the OSCE, NATO and other international partners, are actively engaged in performing a range of demining actions on the liberated territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including providing mine-risk education for Ukrainian citizens in conflict-affected areas. However, humanitarian demining will be possible only after the end of hostilities. So far, even repair of the critical infrastructure damaged by persistent shelling by Russian guns remains a major challenge.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of international cooperation in addressing the threats posed by explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines, as well as in the implementation of the respective international instruments. We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution submitted by Bolivia will bring closer a total ban on the use of one of the most inhuman weapons of war ever created.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank the Bolivian presidency for having brought the hazards of mines and explosives to the attention of the Security Council. My delegation expresses its appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Alexander Zuev and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for their insightful briefings and commends their efforts to bring about stability in the world. We also value highly the work done by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in this regard and especially the successful mine action in Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Iraq and Colombia.

My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

Mine action is at the core of post-conflict humanitarian response, recovery and development in all 70 States affected. Mines and explosives take a high death toll and mutilate their victims, restrict the movement of people and humanitarian aid, make land unsuitable for cultivation and deny citizens access to water, food, care and trade. Contamination by mines and explosive remnants of war affects civilian populations, United Nations operations and global peace and security.

The growing number of intra-State conflicts and the expanded range of explosive hazards have led to growing requests for United Nations emergency humanitarian mine-action assistance. Mine action enables the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees and ensures access for humanitarian actors and peacekeepers. We urge the international community to support, through predictable, earmarked United Nations funding, the activities of UNMAS, which has proved to be an invaluable and efficient tool in mitigating the hazards of mines.

Effective mine action should include the five pillars, the first of which is to clear, remove and destroy landmines and explosive remnants of war and mark or fence off contaminated areas. Education about risks, safety and identifying mines and explosive remnants is essential. Medical assistance measures and rehabilitation services for victims, advocacy for a world free from the threat of landmines, and the need for countries to implement international treaties remain

crucial. At the same time, countries should be helped to strengthen their national capacities to deal with the threat posed by mines and explosives.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs can share good practices and develop guidance on mitigating the threat of explosive weapons in populated areas. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction has, since its entry into force, played an important role in addressing humanitarian issues related to the use of such weapons. We fully share and support the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Based on the importance of the humanitarian aspects of this issue, from 2003 to 2009 Kazakhstan's engineer sapper unit in Iraq neutralized more than 4.5 million explosive devices and provided specialized training to the Iraqi security forces. In the process of furthering our national capacities in countering the threat posed by mines and explosives, my country has established and developed a demining centre.

Kazakhstan is committed to joining the multilateral effort to ensure the safety and security of civilians and to sustain peace and reinforce stabilization.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by expressing my full appreciation to Bolivia for having organized this briefing, which is aimed at underscoring this very important issue.

Landmines and explosive remnants of war pose a serious threat to the life and safety of civilians in many countries throughout the world. The hazards posed by such explosives indiscriminately threaten not only civilians but also those working in national law-enforcement institutions, in addition to peacekeepers and humanitarian relief workers, including deminers.

In addition, such explosives have grave long-term humanitarian, social and development consequences. They pose an obstacle to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians in need and to the development of affected areas. This limits the chances of development and of improving the socioeconomic conditions of the people living in such areas. They also constitute a heavy burden on peacebuilding in countries emerging from conflicts, which can last for decades after the conflicts end. Neglected mines and explosive remnants of wars are sources to obtain the materials required to manufacture improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Those IEDs are used by armed groups and terrorists in many attacks that have claimed the lives of thousands across different countries and regions of the world.

Egypt is one of the countries that is most affected by mines and their impacts. More than 22.7 million mines and explosive devices were laid in Egyptian territories during the Second World War. That is 20 per cent more than the total number of laid mines in the world. More than 17 million of those mines exist in the area of El Alamein. Identifying the locations of such a huge number of mines and clearing them require significant financial resources. Therefore, they are a great impediment of development, not to mention the humanitarian threat that has led to thousands of casualties over the years.

Given all this, Egypt has paid special attention to addressing the issue. Egypt established the National Demining Committee to oversee demining activities and the development of affected areas. The Committee has drafted a national mine strategy to address mine issues in collaboration with various relevant ministries and governmental bodies, as well as with civil society organizations. A trust fund has also been established, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, to assist in implementing that strategy. Egypt has also implemented a moratorium on the transfer of mines to any other country in 1984. Egypt also stopped the production of mines in 1988, even before any international conventions on the matter existed. Egypt has stressed the importance of striking a balance between humanitarian considerations and considerations related to the legitimate use of mines for self-defence, as well as their use as a regulated and controlled way to secure borders.

Egypt stresses the important role played by the United Nations, through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action to provide assistance in the field of mine action. Egypt also welcomes the incorporation of mine action into the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions authorized by the Security Council in conflict areas. Egypt also stresses the importance of drafting a comprehensive approach to mine action. That approach should mobilize efforts within the international community to support national efforts in countries affected by mines and provide assistance to build capacities to deal with mines and hazardous explosives. Egypt also stresses that any legal framework or instrument should respond in particular to the legitimate concerns of the States most affected by

mines and explosive hazards. The States that laid mines in territories of other States should bear the legal and moral responsibility for having done so. They should share the burden of disposing of such mines.

In conclusion, Egypt hopes that today's meeting will contribute to mobilizing the international community to intensify cooperation in order to address the humanitarian-, security- and development-related consequences of mines and explosive hazards.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The statement of the representative of Ukraine, which featured simple allegations, was made with the single goal of distracting from Kyiv's lack of resolve to implement the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, it was no surprise that he made uncorroborated allegations and siought to besmirch Russia. Ukraine blamed Russia for the tragic incident of 23 April on the contact line, when a vehicle of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine exploded. We have heard an entire corpus of similar allegations concerning similarly tragic incidents in Ukraine, which usually come in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Afterwards, when that incident leads to an impartial investigation, Ukraine falls silent. Today, we are seeing the very same thing in spite of the fact that an international investigation is already under way.

If anyone has any information or proof, they should swiftly provide it to the specially established investigative group led by the Deputy Chair of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission. They should do that rather than get into political demagogery. We have our own data regarding the incident, but we do not speculate about it so as not to hamper the investigation.

That is why, instead of spreading uncorroborated evidence, we must deal with the actual peace process. That is especially true because the Ukrainian statement said the right thing — namely, that humanitarian demining activities can begin only after the end of the conflict. That, however, requires the swift implementation of all provisions of the Minsk agreements, first and foremost in the political field, the provision of a special status for certain areas of the Donbas and the holding of elections, as well as rebuilding the economic and banking systems and the provision of amnesty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Ukraine has asked to make an additional statement.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I will be very brief. He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones. It is appalling that the Russian Federation, which supplies separatists in the Donbas with all kinds of ordnance, ammunition and mines, has the nerve to lecture about mine awareness and demining.

The meeting rose at noon.

United Nations S/PV.7967

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7967th meeting
Tuesday, 13 June 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2017/465)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2017/465)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/465, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to present the report (S/2017/465) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) . The report submitted to the Security Council today lays out the current situation with respect to peace and security in the Central African subregion, as well as the activities undertaken by UNOCA since November 2016.

Since my last briefing (see S/PV.7828), political tensions have persisted in some Central African countries, mostly due to recent or future electoral processes. Ongoing tensions have hampered progress towards strengthening the rule of law, peace and development and have posed a threat to human rights, in particular the freedoms of expression and assembly, while the political space continues to shrink. I have maintained regular contact with stakeholders, particularly Governments and policymakers, to advocate for the peaceful resolution of disputes through inclusive and frank dialogue.

(*spoke in English*)

In Gabon, the national dialogue that took place from 29 March to 25 May produced a series of recommendations, including on institutional and constitutional reforms in the legislative and election-management bodies. Two key recommendations pertain to the responsibility of announcing the electoral results, which is transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the election-management body, and the revision of the length of the mandate of the members of the Constitutional Court, from seven years and unlimited renewals, to a non-renewable nine-year term. With regard to the President of the Republic, the report recommends no changes to the length of the presidential mandate — seven years — and does not recommend instating a term limit. The outcome of the national dialogue has been criticized by some of the main opposition leaders. I will continue to use my good offices to engage with all Gabonese stakeholders to continue to defuse post-electoral tensions.

In Cameroon, tensions seem to be progressively subsiding as a result of measures announced by the Government to address grievances expressed by lawyers and teachers of the English-speaking regions of the north-west and south-west of the country, such as reforms in the judicial and education sectors. In addition, after a three-month interruption, Internet service has been restored to the affected regions. There is a growing consensus among the protagonists that contentious issues need to be addressed through peaceful means and dialogue for the sake of the stability and national unity of Cameroon. I believe that the Anglophone question and the related sense of marginalization in the north-western and south-western regions can be resolved only through genuine and inclusive political dialogue.

However, I remain concerned that 27 civilians detained in connection with the crisis in the English-speaking regions, including three leaders of the Cameroon Anglophone Movement, will be tried in a military court under the provisions of recently adopted terrorism laws for acts of terrorism and complicity to perpetrate such acts, and may face the death penalty if found guilty. In that regard, on 7 June the presiding judge dismissed the request for the provisional release of the three leaders of the Anglophone movement and ordered the case to resume on 29 June.

In the Republic of the Congo, the unresolved aftermath of the March 2016 presidential election is a growing source of concern, with persistent humanitarian and human rights ramifications in the Pool region, and lingering political tensions between the Government and the opposition. Last week, I returned from the Republic of the Congo, where I continued to engage and encourage all stakeholders, especially the Government, to promote dialogue as the best way to address the sociopolitical challenges facing the country, while also ensuring humanitarian access to the Pool region.

As reported by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga yesterday (see S/PV.7965), the Secretary-General has launched an action plan to respond to the evolving situation in the Central African Republic, following last month's increase in violence in the country's south-east. UNOCA will work closely with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in support of the rapid revitalization of the political process, which is at the heart of the proposed action plan. More specifically, UNOCA will pursue its engagement with the subregion collectively, through existing regional mechanisms and individually with key countries, to ensure that they continue to play a constructive role in the resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic.

As the Council noted during its visit to the Lake Chad basin region in March, the activities of Boko Haram have undermined development and exacerbated economic hardship in the region. Boko Haram remains a serious threat to regional stability despite the military progress achieved by the Multinational Joint Task Force against the terrorist group. Last month, in line with resolution 2349 (2017) of 31 March, two teams from UNOCA travelled to Chad and Cameroon to assess the impact of Boko Haram on the population, especially on women and children. Threats by Boko Haram continue to hinder humanitarian access to the affected areas, further compounding the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons. It is crucial, therefore, to sustain international support to the subregion and provide increased assistance, including equipment and logistics, to the Multinational Joint Task Force in order to strengthen its operational effectiveness.

The continued threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to regional stability should not be underestimated, especially as the Ugandan and the South Sudanese forces have now disengaged from the African Union Regional Task Force, along with the United States special forces. I am concerned about the impact of that withdrawal, as it will create a security vacuum that may be exploited by the LRA and other armed groups operating in the region. MINUSCA is not mandated to conduct anti-LRA military operations and the Central African Republic national security forces, which could in the long run fill the gap left by the exit of the Ugandan forces, still require training and structural reforms. All training efforts will need to be in line with the overall security sector reform process and coordinated with other partners supporting the Central African armed forces. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Ugandan forces, those of other contributing countries, and the military personnel of the Regional Task Force for their dedication to fighting the LRA. Collectively, there is a need to remain focused on efforts aimed at the total eradication of the LRA. UNOCA will remain engaged, including by reviewing the United Nations regional strategy, in order to address the threat and impact of the LRA and to ensure coordination among the various stakeholders working on the issue.

The 44th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), held in Yaoundé from 29 May to 2 June, assessed the peace and security situation in the subregion, including elections-related and socioeconomic tensions, the upsurge of violence in the Central African Republic and its regional dimension, including transhumance related tensions, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Twenty-five years after the establishment of UNSAC, member States found it fitting to evaluate its performance with a view to enhancing its operations and effectiveness. In that respect, Member States adopted, in the form of a declaration, a number of measures on UNSAC's working methods and on enhancing synergies with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and better addressing the evolving peace and security situation in the subregion. UNSAC member States also adopted a ministerial declaration on the Central African Republic, reflecting their continued concern for the situation in that country.

(*spoke in French*)

The Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used

for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, also known as the Kinshasa Convention entered into force on 8 March. The Secretary-General congratulated the States members of UNSAC on that achievement, while encouraging those countries that had not yet done so to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. UNOCA will continue to encourage the Member States concerned to do so and will continue to support subregional disarmament efforts.

In the past six months, UNOCA has strengthened its cooperation with its two main subregional partners, ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). In particular, in accordance with the framework for cooperation and plan of action between UNOCA and ECCAS, we have institutionalized quarterly technical meetings that have strengthened our common understanding of the situation in the subregion and enabled UNOCA to bolster its support for ECCAS.

Among other things, ECCAS has asked for support in revitalizing and operationalizing its Mediation and Preventive Diplomacy Unit and in strengthening its collaboration with civil society with regard to early warning. In April, the Council of Ministers of ECCAS also adopted a timetable and terms of reference for institutional reforms to be implemented by December 2018, with the main goal of strengthening the political role of the ECCAS secretariat and making it more effective, while accelerating subregional integration by merging the CEMAC with the ECCAS. UNOCA and the Department of Political Affairs will continue to support the process of institutional reform.

In order to ensure the coherence and coordination of the work of the United Nations, UNOCA will continue to enhance its collaboration with the Envoys and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, the Regional Directors of the United Nations system entities and the Resident Coordinators in the subregion. It will continue to mobilize the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, including the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission, with a view to achieving the common goals of preventing conflict and peacebuilding in Central Africa.

UNOCA looks forward to resolute commitment on the part of the Security Council in efforts to promote peace and security in Central Africa and reaffirms its pledge to work closely with Member States in the Central African subregion to achieve that goal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. François Louncény Fall, for his briefing. Uruguay acknowledges the important work carried out by UNOCA in terms of good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation, and in support of United Nations and regional and subregional initiatives to achieve peace and security in the region.

With regard to the briefing by the Special Representative, we note that the tensions caused by the controversy surrounding electoral processes continue to affect the Central African subregion, although, in a few cases, tensions have been eased by attempts at dialogue between Governments and opposition groups. In that regard, we welcome in particular the various efforts made by countries in the subregion to peacefully reduce tensions through genuine and inclusive dialogue. We encourage all interested parties to cooperate with each other with transparency and in good faith in order to resolve the various political, social and economic issues.

Having more women participate in the decision-making process would help us to make headway on the issue. There is still a very low level of women's participation in the subregion. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/465), there have been a few positive developments in that regard, such as the establishment and development of a regional platform on the issue of women, peace and security. Nonetheless, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), whose goal is to ensure that women play a greater role in decision-making, remains a challenge in Central Africa. Uruguay believes that more effective participation by women in the post-conflict transition phase would be vital to ensuring lasting peace.

I would like to highlight two very important situations that Uruguay believes clearly reflect the difficult living conditions faced by a large number of civilians in many countries of the subregion — the humanitarian and human rights situations.

According to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the violence and insecurity caused by Boko Haram has destroyed families and communities in the Lake Chad basin region, where 2.4 million people are displaced and more than 7 million require food assistance. Throughout the region, there are more than 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid, which makes it the backdrop for one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. In that regard, we commend the collective efforts of the international community — and of the countries in Central African subregion in particular — to address the threat posed by terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and Lord's Resistance Army. Such efforts have eased, at least to some extent, the tremendous suffering they inflict on the civilian population.

As to the human rights situation, Uruguay is concerned about the information contained in the report with regard to ongoing human rights violations in many countries of the subregion, where the excessive use of force, detention and arbitrary arrests of political opponents, civil society activists and media professionals reflect a persistent trend that leads to the reduction of political space. In addition, the prevailing climate of impunity in some countries continues to be of concern, given that, among other things, it is a major hindrance to creating an environment that is conducive to the holding of peaceful elections and a clear path to democratic governance.

Lastly, I would like to express Uruguay's support for the Special Representative and all UNOCA personnel, who work tirelessly to promote peace and security in Central Africa.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, Mr. Fall, for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2017/465). My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

First, Kazakhstan welcomes all ongoing political and electoral processes in the countries of the Central African region and believes that they should be held in a strictly peaceful and legal manner in order to avoid a deterioration of the political and security situation.

Secondly, the degradation of the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation is another worrisome aspect that can lead to an outbreak of violence. Long-term stability and sustainable peace can be achieved only by strengthening the security/development nexus, which is a bedrock of stabilization, reconciliation and development in the region. It is therefore critically important today to focus on the root causes of conflicts in the region and address them using the full potential of the United Nations and international organizations, including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States, Member States and other stakeholders. It is our strong belief that all United Nations agencies in the region must elaborate a common strategy to deliver as one, and all donors to the international conferences held in Oslo and Brussels should fulfil their obligations in full and as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we commend the success of all the States of the region in their fight against armed groups in the Central African subregion, especially the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Boko Haram. Kazakhstan fully supports the work of the African Union, which is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the fight against Boko Haram. That terrorist organization is not a threat only to the Lake Chad basin area, but to the African continent, as a whole.

Fourthly, the LRA remains a significant threat to the civilian population in affected areas. The AU-led Regional Task Force did a great job. But, in order to avoid a security gap after the withdrawal of Ugandan and South Sudanese forces, we now need to consider how the international community can strengthen the Central African Armed Forces. We support the proposal by Uganda, the Sudan and South Sudan to train the Central African Armed Forces to take over the responsibilities of the Regional Task Force. Kazakhstan welcomes the decision taken by the African Union to extend its Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA mandate for another 12 months, until 27 May 2018, taking into consideration the need to review the concept of operations and coordination mechanism for cross-border operations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, Mr. Fall, for his

informative briefing and wishes him every success in his duties.

Bolivia supports and acknowledges the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and understands the challenges the Office faces in achieving peace, security and development in the region. Although it is clear that several Central African countries currently face challenging security, humanitarian and economic conditions, we recognize that UNOCA has contributed to significant achievements in those areas.

The political situation in the Central African subregion is plagued with tensions linked to various types of processes. Bolivia believes that those processes must be allowed to take place with full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each State. Although each country's situation is unique, we believe that conflicts in the region can be resolved only through constructive dialogue and respect for prevailing norms. In addition, neighbouring countries, regional organizations and the international community must pool and coordinate their efforts in that endeavour.

With regard to security, cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, the so-called Lord's Resistance Army and other groups must be a priority for UNOCA and other organizations and Governments in the region. With respect to action against Boko Haram, we commend the positive outcomes of programmes developed by the Governments of the region and of the Lake Chad basin and through international cooperation. Although Boko Haram's ability to launch attacks has been reduced, its activities continue to pose a threat to millions of civilians, who are victims of terrorism and who find it difficult to recover from the scars it leaves.

Governments' efforts to combat the root causes of conflict must be supported. In that connection, I take this opportunity to welcome the work of the Multinational Joint Task Force, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, among other organizations.

Although the so-called Lord's Resistance Army has been weakened, it nevertheless continues to be a threat to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result of the recent withdrawal of troops that were fighting the Lord's Resistance Army, a joint strategy should be developed with the African Union and the countries involved in order not to leave vacuums that could be exploited by members of that group and to cooperate in the fight against poaching and illicit trafficking in wildlife, which is a source of financing for this and other groups.

Concerning the humanitarian situation, in the Lake Chad basin alone approximately 10 million people urgently need humanitarian assistance. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees are vulnerable to food insecurity, diseases and a lack of basic services. We call on the international community and financial institutions to provide the necessary resources to address the needs of vulnerable people of the region.

In conclusion, Bolivia encourages UNOCA, along with other regional organizations and the international community, to continue working to achieve peace, stability and development in the Central African subregion.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7968

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7968th meeting

Wednesday, 14 June 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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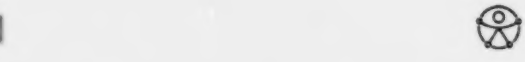

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/494, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2358 (2017).

The meeting rose at 10.05 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7969

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7969th meeting
Wednesday, 14 June 2017, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/437)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-16910 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2017/437)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/437, which contains the special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr. Wane: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Darfur. On this tenth anniversary of the Council's decision to deploy the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), I would like to draw the attention of Council members to the joint recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the reconfiguration of the Mission, as submitted in their joint special report on the strategic review of UNAMID (S/2017/437).

A decade has elapsed since the Secretary-General, in his letter dated 5 June 2007 (S/2007/307), proposed the mandate and the structure of UNAMID to the Security Council. Since then, significant developments in the Sudan and the wider region have taken place, and these require that UNAMID adjust to new realities. With this in mind, the Secretary-General recommended, in his letter of 28 October 2016 to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/915), that a joint African Union-United Nations strategic review of UNAMID be undertaken, in close consultation with the Government of the Sudan, in order to provide detailed recommendations to the Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council on the Mission's priorities and configuration. The review took place from 5 to 17 March 2017, and the joint African Union-United Nations recommendations were consulted with the Government of Sudan and interested parties. I would like to briefly introduce the main elements of the proposed reconfiguration.

The report notes that, over the past three years, the armed conflict that gave rise to the deployment of UNAMID has markedly changed, following a successful military campaign by the Government, which reduced the rebellion to a small presence of the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid in Western Jebel Marra. The number of intercommunal and security incidents has also decreased as a result of the efforts of the Government and community leaders, with the support of UNAMID. In parallel, with the conclusion of the national dialogue and the inclusion of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur into the Constitution, progress has been made on the political front.

Yet, as illustrated by an internally displaced person population of 2.7 million, a number of crucial grievances at the origin of the conflict and key issues related to its aftermath are still to be addressed. While security in the State capitals has improved, challenges in other parts of Darfur remain. This is due mainly to the activities of militia groups, unresolved intercommunal disputes over land and other resources, the prevalence of weapons and crime, coupled with the inadequate capacity and effectiveness of the rule of law institutions.

At present, UNAMID deals with two sets of issues that are both related to the root causes of the conflict: first, the continued instability in the greater Jebel Marra area and the displacement in the vicinity; and secondly, intercommunal violence. In view of the that, the joint report proposes a two-pronged approach combining peacebuilding and peacekeeping tasks. Most parts of Darfur require a more peacebuilding-oriented approach, while in the Jebel Marra area and its vicinity the Mission's efforts would focus on traditional peacekeeping tasks and on addressing the emergency

attention arising from the insecurity in the area that prevents internally displaced persons from returning.

This concept — which includes the closure of 11 team sites, the opening of one temporary operating base in Golo, in the Jebel Marra area, and the withdrawal of the military from another seven team sites out of a current total 36 — would enable the Mission to bring the troop ceiling down to eight battalions, from the current number of 16 battalions, or to 8,735 troops, while the police ceiling will be brought down to 2,360, from a current total of 3,403. This would represent a reduction of 44 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, of the military and police authorized ceilings.

(*spoke in French*)

The Mission's priorities still address the main issues at stake and make it possible to contextualize the tasks UNAMID should undertake and where it has the most value added. I would indicate, however, that the report recommends that its priorities be adjusted slightly. In terms of the political process, a stronger focus should be put on the effective implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which, as I pointed out earlier, is now incorporated in the Constitution and contains useful provisions to address the underlying causes of conflict and to create peace dividends for the population in Darfur. Activities connected with the protection of civilians in the greater Jebel Marra area, in collaboration with the humanitarian country team, will revolve around physical protection and emergency relief, whereas in the rest of the Darfur states civilian-protection activities will focus on livelihood issues and issues related to the police and the capacity to promote the rule of law capacities.

With regard to intercommunal conflicts, the work of the Mission should prioritize those intercommunal conflicts, which have the potential to cause the highest number of casualties, and derail national political processes, while a stronger partnership with the country team is also required to address issues related to seasonal migration and the extension of rule-of-law institutions throughout the territory.

I would like to highlight that the developments I mentioned earlier continue, of course, to be true since the conclusion of the strategic review. The level of armed hostilities is significantly lower than in previous years. The armed movements attempted to reassert their military presence in North and East Darfur in late May and early June, but remain unable to conduct sustained military operations in the face of the military of the Sudanese Government. In response to intercommunal conflict during the migration season, Government authorities at both the local and federal levels, as well as community leaders, supported by UNAMID, undertook preventive measures and endeavoured to reduce the impact of the difficulties encountered, thereby contributing to reduced violence as compared to recent years.

Finally, I would like to say that the reconfiguration of UNAMID is an important milestone towards the completion of its mandate. The successful implementation of that reconfiguration, however, requires the full support and cooperation of the Government of the Sudan and its institutions, including to ensure that there is no administrative or security vacuum in the areas that will be vacated by UNAMID. It is also important to continue to work closely with the country team on issues related to land, the search for durable solutions for internally displaced persons, transitional justice and reconciliation.

I will conclude by pointing that out that it is more necessary than ever that we continue our joint efforts to allow for the achievement of peace and security that the people of Darfur desire so greatly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members that wish to make statements.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Wane, for his briefing on the special report (S/2017/437) of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Uruguay notes the report's indication that hostilities between the Government of the Sudan and rebel forces have decreased considerably in recent months, and that the regional climate has improved as a result of greater cooperation with the Central African Republic, Chad and Uganda. It should be noted, however, that one of the main sources of violence persisting in Darfur remains conflicts between communities, which are closely related to the root causes of the conflict and exacerbated by armed militias, as well as by the fact that weapons

are widespread among the civilian population and that the institutions of the rule of law do not yet have the necessary capacity or effectiveness to overcome such obstacles.

Yesterday, the Security Council convened to discuss mine action and the mitigation of the threat of explosive devices (see S/PV.7966). Today, We are addressing conflict in which former battlefields remain contaminated by remnants of war explosives, particularly in Jebel Marra. The Government of the Sudan and the international community must work together to remove all artifacts of war and thereby guarantee the inhabitants the possibility of safe transit throughout their territory.

We are encouraged by the general improvement of the security situation and by recent political developments in the context of the national dialogue. In that regard, we consider it essential that the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements continue to work towards signing and implementing an agreement on a cessation of hostilities and the full implementation of the remaining provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Progress in those areas would undoubtedly create the conditions necessary to effectively addressing the root causes of conflict and contribute to the safe return of more than 2.5 million internally displaced persons from Darfur to their homes.

With respect to UNAMID, Uruguay takes note of the strategic review conducted by a joint team of the African Union and the United Nations, which includes proposals for adjustments to the Mission, taking into account the evolution of the situation on the ground and adjusting the Mission's mandate to the remaining challenges. In this regard, we support the recommendations relating to the Mission's priority tasks, namely, the protection of civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian access, support for the political process, in cooperation with the African Union, and support for addressing the root causes of conflict.

In conclusion, let me express Uruguay's gratitude to all UNAMID personnel, the United Nations country team and the humanitarian workers who continue to work tirelessly, often in difficult conditions, to achieve sustainable peace in Darfur.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

Bolivia thanks the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, for his briefing on the special report (S/2017/437) of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Bolivia welcomes the recommendations contained in the strategic review. We believe that the proposed adjustments to UNAMID duly reflect the gradual evolution of the situation on the ground over the past year. Moreover, the new focus will allow us to adapt UNAMID to the current needs of the population of Darfur. It is worth recalling that the last strategic review was undertaken in 2013, when the situation was quite different from what it is today. Operation Decisive Summer, implemented in 2014, led to a sharp reduction in the level of hostilies between the Government of the Sudan and armed rebel forces, who at the time had a very active presence in the Sudan. With the exception of the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, their capacities have been significantly reduced over the past few months. We have seen no significant clashes take place since September 2016.

Such improvements in the security situation will allow us to refocus the mandate of the Mission not only on peacekeeping but also on peacebuilding tasks, as suggested in the report. Focusing on peacebuilding will allow UNAMID to help strengthen the State's institutions, train and develop the police, strengthen the rule of law and advance the political process through the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and in particular through support for the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, which is responsible for the implementation of recommendations on the Sudan. It will also allow UNAMID to address the root causes of the conflict, which is a priority in efforts to achieve stable and lasting peace in the region, which for years has suffered the grave consequences of the conflict in Darfur, in which civilians have been affected most.

On that point, as outlined in the strategic review, the protection of civilians will revolve around the action plan of the Jebel Marra task force. Bolivia naturally believes that it is important to protect the most vulnerable in armed conflicts. To that end, we look forward to close coordination with the Government on that initiative. The composition and mandate of the

Jebel Marra task force must take its suggestions and concerns into account.

However, while we appreciate the aforementioned improvements, the humanitarian situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees remains a source of concern. According to the most recent report of the Secretary-General, there are approximately 2.6 million internally displaced persons, who are exposed to various forms of violence. Women and children are the most affected.

In implementing the suggestions arising from the strategic review, the Government has an opportunity to demonstrate that it is capable of protecting all civilians across the entire country. We hope that progress will be made in the plan for the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and in the initiative for a volunteer cessation of hostilities. We trust that the Government, in line with the progress it has made, will lend the support necessary to UNAMID to fully comply with its mandate, granting it the necessary access to do so, and guarantee support for humanitarian workers so that they can meet their responsibilities.

To conlude, it is important to highlight the fact that if the United Nations country team is to fulfil the duties conferred upon it, the support of the international community is crucial.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report submitted to the Council (S/2017/437). I would also like to thank my friend the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Wane, for his briefing. He knows that we have long worked since 2004 in Aboja to consolidate peace and security in Darfur.

Allow me to extend my sympathies to the people and the Government of Nigeria in the light of the killing of a Nigerian peacekeeper in Darfur. I offer my condolences to his family.

Many reports of the Secretary-General on Darfur — notably his most recent report of 18 May on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), in addition to reports issued by other United Nations entities concerning the situation in Darfur, have affirmed and noted the significant progress made in Darfur in all areas, especially the security and humanitarian situation following the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to secure the five states of Darfur. This has positively affected security and stability. We have long pursued such positive, encouraging and natural progress.

On 20 May, the Sudanese Liberation Army/Minni Minawi from Libya and the Justice and Equality Movement tried to infiltrate our borders from South Sudan in a failed attempt to drag us back into war. Therefore, the cooperation of neighbouring countries, given the successful joint experience of the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic in protecting our shared borders and preventing armed groups from infiltrating, is the only way to end the unrest that has become part of our painful past. I note that the report of the Panel of Experts appointed by the Council, which was reviewed by the Council in February, as well as the report presented today, reach the same conclusion that the Justice and Equality Movement and Sudanese Liberation Army/Minni Minawi have been conducting mercenary activities, including banditry and human trafficking, to finance their activities.

On the other hand, all recent reports note the efforts and role of the Government to counter crime and banditry in Darfur. We have made significant progress in that regard. Further efforts are still being made to promote security and judicial oversight with a view to limiting the phenomenon and establishing State authority. The Government of the Sudan has deployed additional police personnel, with 29,314 officers now deployed across the municipalities of the states of Darfur. The Ministry of Justice has also implemented a plan to appoint district attorneys in each of Darfur's municipalities as a way of promoting the rule of law and justice in urban and rural areas of the state, in addition to achieving the principle of zero impunity and an increase in the number of offices providing specialized and general legal assistance.

Council members are aware that the main reason for insecurity, criminality and tribal violance in Darfur is the proliferation of weapons among civilians. The Government has announced a plan to collect weapons and limit their use to uniformed troops. Initiatives to drive weapons-collection and non-proliferation efforts obviously require large financial resources and qualified and adequate personnel. We therefore expect

the donor States and the United Nations specialized agencies to provide financial and technical assistance to the Sudan so that sustained peace and security may be achieved..

My delegation welcomes the recommendations made by the recent meeting of the joint working group, which were adopted by the Tripartite Coordination Mechanism at the leadership-level meeting on 22 May, which stipulate that UNAMID should withdraw from 14 regions in the state of Darfur. We welcome the recommendations of the report of the strategic review working group included in the joint report by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General, which stipulate that UNAMID's military component should be drawn down by 44 per cent, although we had hoped that the recommendations would stipulate withdrawal from all areas on which the joint working group has reached a concensus. In that regard, we hope that the Council will adopt these recommendations unanimously so that the competent authorities can start the gradual drawdown and transfer the tasks that were conducted by UNAMID to the United Nations the country team in the Sudan.

My delegation wishes to underscore that the Government of the Sudan is fully ready to continue cooperating and positively engaging with UNAMID, the African Union, the United Nations and all other regional and international partners in order for the Mission to be able to fully discharge its duties, complete its departure in a smooth, phased and gradual manner that could be a model for the drawdown of other peacekeeping missions, and save financial resources for preventive diplomacy and sustaining peace and achieving comprehensive development.

We look forward to starting a new, serious phase, which makes it incumbent upon us politically and logistically to reconsider the sanctions that were imposed on the Sudan 12 years ago, in 2005, pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005), in clear recognition of the situation on the ground in the country today. This is an inevitable step. We are open to the ideas that the Security Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations could put forward on this matter.

The humanitarian situation in Darfur remains of interest to the Government of the Sudan, despite the fact that increasing numbers of internally displaced persons are voluntarily returning to their villages. Some internally displaced persons camps are now no longer needed, thanks to the current excellent situation of peace and security, given that efforts made by peace partners in Darfur to build villages for voluntary return, where all basic services for citizens are available. Moreover, security has been restored in the home villages of the internally displaced persons.

All this makes it all the more necessary to pursue domestic and international efforts to encourage voluntary return. On top of that, the Government of the Sudan has put forward a plan to address the situation, comprising three options. The first option consists of internally displaced persons simply returning voluntarily to their villages. The second involves integrating camps for internally displaced persons into nearby cities and doing the requisite planning to provide them with basic services. Under the third option, internally displaced persons will be able to choose an area to relocate that is not their place of origin. Each of these options requires financial resources. The assistance of the international community is therefore needed. We commend the support that has been provided by the State of Qatar, which sponsored the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and has financed many development projects that have enabled us to achieve security and stability. Other friendly countries, such as China, Japan and Turkey, inter alia, have also offered their support within the framework of the Doha Document.

As noted in the report, the most important priority for the United Nations is the return of internally displaced persons and access to the affected enclaves by the remainder of Abdel Wahid's troops in some areas of Western Marah Mountain, since we have managed to preserve the vision of the Government of the Sudan arising from provisions contained in the Doha Document. However, accuracy is essential when counting the number of internally displaced persons in Darfur. We have counted some 1.8 million internally displaced persons, while the figure set by UNAMID stands at 2.7 million.

With regard to access, we reiterate the assertation made in the October joint report of the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations agencies that there is no problem in access. This jibes with the assertion in the report before us that there has been significant improvement in access to the populations of the affected areas. We recall the statement made by the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs of the Government of the Sudan's to the effect that access to 92 per cent of the regions of Darfur is accessible through

simple notification, which means that there is no need for Government authorization. We maintain our call for information on internally displaced persons to be issued by a single body comprised of the Government of the Sudan, the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations and the African Union.

We thank UNAMID for its efforts in all areas and peacekeepers for their sacrifices of recent years. We also thank the troop- and police-contributing countries and reiterate our readiness to cooperate with all regional and international partners in all matters related to UNAMID until its last contingent leaves the country and full and sustainable peace has been achieved.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7970

Security Council

Distr: General
14 June 2017

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 7970th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 14 June 2017, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 14 June 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7970th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

"The President invited Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Annadif.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Annadif and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7971

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7971st meeting
Thursday, 15 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

African Union

Report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

African Union

Report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; Mr. Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union; and Mr. Donald Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund.

Mr. Chergui is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Addis Ababa.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/454, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations.

I now give the floor to Ms. Viotti.

Ms. Viotti: I am pleased to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support to African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454). The report is submitted pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016) of 18 November 2016, in which the Security Council also requested the Secretary-General to continue working closely with the African Union (AU) to refine options for further cooperation on relevant AU proposals, including joint planning and the process for mandating AU peace support operations, subject to authorization by the Council, as well as on United Nations financing and support.

The international community must be positioned to adequately respond creatively to dynamic security contexts around the world, and regional organizations are central to this effort. Building on sustained efforts to strengthen the United Nations-African Union partnership, our organizations are deeply engaged in the development of innovative, forward-leaning and lasting collaborative systems. We must move away from ad hoc arrangements. The report before the Council presents proposals for institutionalized approaches to joint planning and mandating, financing and supporting African Union peace support operations.

The report, along with the accompanying update from the African Union, is the result of six months of coordination and cooperation between the Secretariat and the AU Commission. Since the African Union Mission in Burundi in 2003, the United Nations has provided many types of support to African Union operations. These include planning, logistical support and a variety of financing mechanisms. Some types of support have been more effective than others.

The earlier joint United Nations-African Union review of mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace support operations examined over a decade of cooperation in support for African Union operations. The present report builds on this effort and proposes more predictable approaches to supporting African Union operations in future. Our aim is not to replicate earlier arrangements but to develop new approaches that reflect lessons learned and to develop the capacities of the African Union and the roles of other partners.

Predictable approaches are required, as the United Nations-African Union partnership is, has been and will be the preferred modality of pursuing peace and security in Africa. To this end, the Secretary-General and African Union Chairperson recently convened the first United Nations-African Union Annual Conference at United Nations Headquarters. During that meeting, they signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, further underscoring the commitment to working closely together based on mutual respect, recognition of complementarity, interdependence and solidarity.

The report also highlights the importance of compliance and oversight, particularly in the areas of human rights and conduct and discipline. These are critical concerns in all peace operations, including those mandated or authorized by the African Union. We are encouraged that the African Union is rigorously working to address these issues, including by further developing its compliance mechanisms. The United

Nations will continue to provide any technical assistance to the African Union's implementation of relevant compliance frameworks.

The African Union is an invaluable partner to the United Nations and we are enormously grateful for Africa's contributions to building a better future for all. As the Secretary-General has often said, the world can greatly benefit from African wisdom, African ideas and African solutions. As noted in the update provided by the African Union, AU operations undertake a wide variety of tasks in a wide variety of circumstances. These include deploying troops rapidly to tackle dynamic security challenges, addressing asymmetric threats and ensuing robust peace enforcement.

Different situations will require different planning, financing and support arrangements, but these can be underpinned by jointly agreed principles and decision-making processes. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in deploying and supporting peace support operations requires not only engagement between the Secretariat and the Commission, but also between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council in mandating and reporting.

A common approach among Member States is also required to address the perennial issue of securing predictable and sustainable financial support for African Union operations. Where United Nations assessed contributions are authorized, the General Assembly will also play a critical oversight role. The concepts, process, conditions and options presented in the report should be considered as a framework that can be flexibly adapted for new operations. Some additional work is required before this framework can be fully utilized, including the development of joint planning and budgeting methodologies. Some of the bureaucratic processes of the two Organizations may also need to be reconciled.

I can assure Council members that the Secretary-General is fully committed to Africa and the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. His report shows that there are no technical challenges that our organizations cannot overcome together. We count on the Council's support to help translate words into action. Together, we can create more efficient and effective solutions to better respond to the needs of the African people and advance international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Viotti for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

Mr. Chergui: Allow me from the outset to express the appreciation of the African Union Commission to the members of the Council for inviting me and Mr. Kaberuka to address the Council with the aim of discussing options for further cooperation and support to African Union peace support operations pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016).

Enhancing the financing of the Africa Union, including its peace support operations, is a central priority for African Union member States. It should be recalled that at the 15 January Addis Ababa Summit, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government decided that member States would fund 25 per cent of the peace support operations budget. During the July 2016 Kigali Summit, the African Union Assembly decided to institute a universal levy of 0.2 per cent on eligible imports to finance the African Union. The 0.2 per cent levy will endow the Peace Fund with a total of $400 million by 2020.

I wish to underline that, with respect to peace support operations, the fundamental problem that the African Union Assembly's financial decision intended to address is the lack of predictable and sustainable financing for African Union-mandated or authorized peace support operations. The African Union has demonstrated its political will in deploying peace support operations in the most challenging environments. Thirteen missions have been deployed since the establishment of the African Union. In all these cases, the financing arrangements were ad hoc and highly unpredictable. Tremendous sacrifices have been made and, in many cases, the ultimate price has been paid by our troops.

Donations in kind made by all member States have also played an important role in the deployment of peace support operations and have often not always been reflected in the overall accounting of contributions to have been made. In taking these financial decisions, the Assembly sought to address three key issues: first, the lack of a dedicated African Union operational peace and security budget; secondly, overreliance on external, ad hoc and unpredictable sources of funding; and thirdly, the absence of a credible African Union instrument that could provide the right accountability

framework for managing African Union member State and external financing.

Resolution 2320 (2016) was a major milestone in enhancing United Nations cooperation with and support to African Union peace support operations. It expressed the United Nations willingness to consider African Union proposals for funding its peace support operations, consistent with applicable international obligations, accountability, transparency and compliance frameworks for African Union peace support operations.

I would like to make four key observations on the progress being made on the Peace Fund for the Council's consideration.

First, the African Union Peace and Security Council, at its 689th meeting, held on 13 May, endorsed the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Peace Fund. The report contained proposals on the scope of African Union operations, the implementation of an enhanced governance structure and accountability framework, and the status of implementation of relevant provisions of resolution 2320 (2016). This endorsement by the Peace and Security Council was a milestone and an expression of the political commitment of African Union member States to the realization and effectiveness of the Peace Fund. The Security Council may wish to consider this report and communiqué of the Peace and Security Council, which has now been officially transmitted to the Secretary-General, especially in current and future discussions of options for possible predictable and sustainable United Nations support to African Union peace support operations.

Secondly, questions have been repeatedly raised on the envisaged scope of operations that will require possible United Nations assess contributions. This question has been partly addressed by the Peace and Security Council in its decision to adopt a case-by-case approach based on the scope of the operations in meeting the new demands of the evolving nature of security challenges in Africa. At the same time, the African Union Commission has developed a common-costs document that clearly articulates the viable operational requirements that could form the basis of burden-sharing between the African Union and the United Nations in future Africa Union support operations. That document is consistent with the African Union's strategic priority of financing the African Standby Force and its rapid-deployment capability in three phases, namely, predeployment, deployment and post-deployment. The Commission will remain seized of the matter and will continue to inform the Security Council on the areas of support that can be addressed within the resources in the Peace Fund.

Thirdly, the most central issue confronting the Africa Union at this stage is the need to mobilize resources from AU member States. I am happy to report that, currently, almost 30 per cent of African Union member States have made contributions to the Fund. Some member States expressed their willingness to make their statutory contributions during the recently held meeting of the Peace and Security Council. In addition, the Chairperson of the African Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, recently extended and expanded the mandate of Mr. Donald Kaberuka as the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund and for the financing of the Union. We are certain that those significant steps will sustain the political momentum, which will lead to the accelerated operationalization of the Peace Fund.

Fourthly, let me state, in the clearest terms possible, the unflinching resolve of the African Commission to strictly observe and promote transparency and good governance, not only in the daily management of the Peace Fund but on all resources devoted to African Union-led peace support operations. The Chairperson of the Commission will appoint the members of the board of trustees of the Peace Fund in the coming days.

Finally, the African Union remains confident that this discussion on the Peace Fund and the possibility of predictable funding, including through United Nations assessed contributions, is consolidating the strategic partnership that has emerged between the African Union and the United Nations. It should be recalled that, on 19 April, during the annual African Union-United Nations conference in New York, Secretary-General Guterres and the African Union Commission Chairperson signed a Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. That was an important step towards ensuring more institutionalized cooperation between both organizations in addressing the security challenges that Africa continues to face. The African Union remains committed to that partnership. The success achieved in our joint efforts to enhance support to African peace support operations will no doubt be a litmus test.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kaberuka.

Mr. Kaberuka: It is an honour and a privilege for me to be here for this important debate. I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency and the entire membership of the Security Council for inviting me and the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security to make a contribution to the update by the African Union to the Security Council on resolution 2320 (2016), with a special focus on the African Union's Peace Fund.

Over the years, and as the nature of international peace and security threats has evolved, various high-level reports and recommendations have made three key points consistently: first, that the crises the world faces today are often so complex that no one single organization is able to provide the needed response; secondly, that regional organizations bring a comparative advantage to the table; and, thirdly, that there is a need for financing mechanisms that are predictable rather than voluntary or ad hoc. A well-funded African Peace and Security Architecture is not simply an African priority, it is a global public good.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken since the adoption of resolution 2320 (2016), on 18 November 2016, as members heard from the Commissioner. I would particularly like to commend the work undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat and by the Commission to follow up on the relevant provisions of the resolution, in particular the consultative process carried out between March and April. I am pleased to note that the process was conducted in the spirit of true partnership and collaboration. I look forward to seeing more processes of that nature between our two organizations.

One of the key issues on which the Council asked to be updated under in resolution 2320 (2016) was progress on the operationalization of the AU Peace Fund, including the overall benchmarks and timelines. Over the past few months, the detailed governance arrangements for the Peace Fund were developed. They were presented to the AU Peace and Security Council on 30 May, and I am pleased to confirm that the Council fully endorsed the proposals. Let me briefly recap the proposed governance arrangements.

As High Representative for the Peace Fund, I was requested to put forward ideas on how the Peace Fund could be financed, structured and governed for the peace and security challenges the continent faces, in a much more predictable way and while avoiding overreliance on multiple unpredictable funding channels. The July 2016 session of the AU Assembly adopted the proposal that the Peace Fund be structured around three windows: mediation and preventive diplomacy, institutional capacity and peace support operations. In addition, a crisis reserve facility — a revolving trust fund provided for under article 21, paragraph 4, of the Peace and Security Council Protocol on Peace and Security — would be established within the Peace Fund to enable rapid responses to unforeseen crises, from any unutilized balances.

The AU policy organs, in particular the Peace and Security Council, have the political authority to guide the activities of the Peace Fund. The Chairperson of the Commission, supported by an executive management committee, will oversee the Fund's day-to-day operations. A board of trustees will be put in place to ensure strategic coherence, enhanced governance and the financial and administrative oversight of the Fund. External partners to the Fund will be invited to nominate two representatives to the board of trustees. An independent evaluation group will provide periodic evaluation on the use and impact of the Fund. A dedicated Peace Fund secretariat will be established within the Commission to manage day-to-day operations and will report to the executive management committee. Finally, an independent Fund manager will be recruited to ensure the highest standards of accountability and compliance with fiduciary rules and procedures in the management of the Fund.

I believe that structure reflects international best practice in terms of fund governance arrangements and will reassure both African member countries and partners to the fund. Of course, it has been adapted to reflect the fact that the African Union is an intergovernmental organization, and not a corporate body. It is for that reason that the Fund will finance only activities that emanate from a decision by a competent AU organ, in this case the Assembly of Heads of State, the Peace and Security Council or the Chairperson, in line with the powers set out in the Protocol.

With respect to the timelines of their implementation, the Chairperson of the Commission aims to expedite the operationalization of the Peace

Fund governance arrangements in 2017. The adoption of the Peace Fund instruments and the the governance structures that I have referred to will be implemented before the end of the year. With those new Governance arrangements, the AU Peace Fund will provide a more effective instrument through which the AU and its partners in the international community will be able to work together to promote the cause of peace and stability in Africa and the world.

I am pleased to say that, as of May — as the Commissioner for Peace and Security has already told the Council — 14 AU member States had made their contribution to the Peace Fund, even before the establishment of the new governance arrangements. Those contributions represent just over 12 per cent of the of the target set for 2017. As part of my new expanded mandate, which is focused on the Peace Fund as well as the overall financing of the African Union, I will be focusing most of my time assisting the Chairperson in implementing the various mechanisms and ensuring that AU member States respect their financial commitments to the African Union. I am confident that the 2017 Peace Fund target can be met.

While AU member States are primarily responsible for financing the Peace Fund, partnerships will continue to play a vital role in supporting the peace and security activities on the African continent. Therefore, deepening cooperation with partners, both traditional and emerging, is imperative.

The current international peace and security architecture is under significant pressure, given the complexity of the challenges that the world faces today. Therefore, forging an effective partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is of the greatest strategic importance for our collective security. In that respect, the financing partnership between the African Union and the United Nations is critical in that it offers a pathway to more predictable funding of AU peace support operations. That enhanced form of partnership must necessarily be based on the two organizations' respective authorities, competencies and capacities. It must also observe the principles of burden-sharing, consultative decision-making, comparative advantage, division of labour and mutual accountability.

There should be no illusions with respect to the political complexity of such an undertaking. However, to the extent that there is accord regarding the urgency of improving the international peace and security architecture in order to address today's security challenges, arriving at a shared solution for new financing arrangement and authorized peace support will be a great achievement for both the African Union and the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Kaberuka for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this briefing on behalf of the Secretary-General regarding options for authorizing and supporting the African Union (AU) Commission's peace support operations. We also thank the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for his report on resolution 2320 (2016). We express our appreciation to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for her briefing on the various options proposed in line with resolution 2320 (2016).

We are also pleased to have with us Mr. Smaïl Chergui Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, via video teleconference, as well as Mr. Donald Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund. We are grateful for their efforts on the issue and for their briefings on steps taken by the African side.

I am delivering my statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal.

We are meeting against the backdrop of some important developments over the past six months that have had great significance for the partnership between the AU and the United Nations. We have new leadership in both organizations and there is a renewed commitment to elevate the AU-United Nations cooperation and partnership to new heights. The visits by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, to the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa in January and by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, to the United Nations Headquarters in New York in April serve as a reaffirmation of the resolve by the new leaderships to further strengthen the cooperation and partnership between the two organizations as a matter of priority. The joint United Nations-African Union framework for enhancing partnership signed by the leaderships

of the two organizations on 19 April is indeed a clear testament to the renewed commitment to work together to, inter alia, address common challenges to peace and security in the African continent across the whole spectrum of the conflict cycle.

On numerous occasions, the Security Council has reiterated its commitment to cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, as well as to arrangements in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. There is indeed growing recognition that a stronger global-regional partnership is needed in order to effectively respond to the peace and security challenges and threats and improve our collective security.

On that basis, the Council has expressed its determnination to take effective steps to further enhance the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union. Of course, we all recall the concrete recommendations made by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which presented its report on 16 June 2015 (see S/2015/446). It included the recommendations regarding the strategic partnership with the African Union, which were later incorporated in the Secretary-General's implementation report (S/2015/682). The Panel's report of the did not put the spotlight on the AU without reason. The reason was explained nowhere more cogently than in the Secretary-General's report on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations:

> "Considering the limitations of the United Nations peacekeeping doctrine with regard to peace enforcement and counter-terrorism, the African Union peace support operations are a tool for the United Nations to better discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in certain situations." (*S/2017/454, para. 61*).

The adoption of resolution 2320 (2016) represents a tangible testament to the Council's commitment to strengthen the cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. In that context, the Council acknowledged the need for more support in order to strengthen AU peace operations and enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing African Union peace operations authorized by the Security Council. In that regard, we appreciate the work undertaken by the Secretariat of the United Nations and the African Union Commission over the past six months to follow up on the implementation of resolution 2320 (2016), in particular the consultative process undertaken between March and April. Accordingly, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations. We also welcome the report to the Chairperson of the Commission, which provides important details on the proposed scope of operations, progress made, future benchmarks and timelines for implementation of the AU Peace Fund, as well as frameworks that support accountability, transparency and compliance as the basis for operationalizing the financing arrangement.

We believe that the four financing options identified in the reports are sound and realistic regarding how to help the Security Council consider taking its first concrete steps on the financing of AU peace support operations. Furthermore, ensuring compliance with international humanitarian and human rights standards is very important for the credibility, legitimacy and, ultimately, the effectiveness of AU peace support operations. In that regard, the progress that the African Union has made on finalizing its human rights conduct and discipline compliance framework is encouraging, and we look forward to its adoption in September. The support of the United Nations for effective implementation of the AU's compliance and accountability framework is crucial, and we commend the Secretary-General for his willingness to assist the AU in that regard.

Lastly, the Security Council has already expressed its intention to take practical steps to establish the principle that AU-mandated peace support operations authorized by the Council should be financed through United Nations assessed contributions, with decisions on the financing of specific missions to be taken on a case-by-case basis. Now that the groundwork has been done in line with resolution 2320 (2016), we would like to ask the Security Council to take practical steps towards adopting a substantive resolution that establishes that principle. We will work with Council members to achieve that objective with a view to realizing the full potential of the United Nations-AU partnership to swiftly and effectively respond to the complex threats and challenges to peace and security today.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China commends Bolivia for convening today's meeting, and would like to thank Mr. Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union (AU); Mr. Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund; and Ms. Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, for their briefings.

As the continent with the world's greatest development potential, Africa is an important force in our efforts to achieve world peace and promote shared development. In the past few years, we have seen the countries of Africa commit to cooperation, self-reliance, unity and coordination and to actively promoting the resolution of African issues in African ways. They have strengthened and developed their collective security mechanisms and achieved outstanding results in dealing with the conflicts in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, thereby making important contributions to the maintenance of peace and security in Africa and the world at large. China heartily commends those efforts.

Some parts of Africa are still facing severe political, security and humanitarian challenges. Terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army, Al-Shabaab and others are still a threat to security. Transnational organized crime in the Sahel and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea are still rampant. The international community must continue to enhance its attention and support through continued assistance aimed at improving Africa's peace, security and development capacities.

In view of the evolving state of peace and security in Africa, the United Nations and the African Union have been actively exploring the ways and areas in which they can deepen their cooperation. Last year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2320 (2016), designed to enhance that cooperation. In April, the two organizations signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. A few days ago, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council (S/2017/454), as did the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, supporting autonomous African Union peace operations. China would like to commend the Council for focusing on finding solutions to African issues and supporting capacity-building for peace and security in Africa. We hope it will continue that momentum and focus its future cooperation efforts on the following areas.

First, the Council should fully respect the role of African countries in settling their own problems and ensure that it is a dominant one. The African Union and Africa's other regional and subregional organizations have unique advantages and a wealth of experience in resolving hotspot issues on the continent. Looking at the success achieved by the Security Council and the African Union in addressing many such issues, we believe that African countries have the ability and wisdom they need to handle their problems appropriately. The Council should fully respect African proposals and ideas, as well as the sovereignty and views of countries hosting peace operations, and enhance its cooperation and coordination with the AU and subregional organizations with a view to creating political synergies.

Secondly, the Council should work to continually improve the cooperation mechanisms between the AU and the United Nations. While our Organization has been increasing the closeness of its cooperation with the African Union in responding to issues in problem areas in Africa, both sides must further improve that cooperation and coordination by making the mechanisms more effective and emphasizing key areas such as conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction. They should work to gradually improve joint planning, decision-making, assessment and reporting, and to jointly implement early-warning procedures for crises, strategic assessments, the creation of mandates, deployments and other efforts. The goal will be to ensure that strategic coordination between the United Nations and the AU and other regional organizations can be implemented in each particular area at various stages and levels, so as make cooperation more efficient.

Thirdly, the Council should take concrete measures to help the African Union improve its capacity-building. The AU's autonomous peace operations have become a very important route by which the international community can respond to conflicts and crises in Africa. They represent a significant complement to United Nations peacekeeping operations and play a major role in maintaining peace and stability on the continent. Owing to its difficulties in obtaining financial resources, equipment and technology, the African Union has been struggling with the challenge of sustaining effective autonomous operations. China therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations for supporting those operations.

We believe that the United Nations should listen to the needs and wishes of the AU by helping it speed up its development of its standby and rapid-reaction forces, counter regional terrorism and establish sustainable, stable and predictable financing mechanisms for its peace operations. We hope that the Security Council and the Secretariat will listen seriously to African countries' views and concerns and will regard African priorities as their own, working with all possible speed to provide the necessary financing, equipment and resources for African peace operations in support of the efforts of the countries and regional organizations concerned to maintain peace and security.

China has always worked actively to implement cooperative efforts with African countries in the area of peace and security. President Xi Jinping has outlined five pillars and 10 cooperation plans aimed at building the Sino-African relationship that cover peace and security issues. We have committed to providing military aid amounting to a total of $100 million by 2020 in support of the AU's standby and rapid-reaction forces. The China-United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund is now operational and will have a lifespan of 10 years. It will help the United Nations focus on peace and development projects in Africa.

Currently, China has 2,600 peacekeepers deployed to seven missions, including Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. China has dispatched escort vessels to the waters off the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden in an effort to help regional countries fight piracy. We are ready to work together with the rest of the international community to fully promote cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union so as to achieve peace, stability and development on the African continent.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I want to begin by conveying our thoughts and prayers to the people of China, as well as to those affected by the school tragedy that we have just heard about this morning. I know that the facts are still incomplete, but from what we have heard so far, it is heartbreaking. The United States stands with the students and the families in prayer.

I want to thank our briefers, as well as Senegal, Ethiopia and Egypt, for their contributions to this meeting. We truly value their leadership in the promotion of cooperation between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations.

The African Union is an indispensable partner to both America and the United Nations in promoting peace and security in Africa. It has a unique capacity to anticipate crises, mediate conflicts and deploy troops and police on short notice. It does so, moreover, in some of the most challenging environments in the world.

We applaud the increasing leadership the AU has displayed in contributing to peace operations and battling terrorist and insurgent groups. In Somalia, the AU quickly deployed to provide security for a fledgling Government in 2007. A decade later, thanks to the bravery and courage of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia AMISOM troop- and police-contributing countries, Somalia is on a gradual path toward stability and peace. In Darfur, the AU partnered with the United Nations to stabilize a complex conflict.

Across the continent, the AU is partnering with subregional organizations and countries to respond to emerging and complex threats — from tense electoral transitions in West Africa to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. We value our cooperation with our African partners. It is in the interest of all of us to work for peace and prosperity in Africa. The question is not whether the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council will continue to improve our cooperation, but rather how we can best work together to promote peace and security.

Progress has been achieved thanks to the work of both organizations, but there is much more work to be done. In order to ensure that the Security Council's response to the AU initiative is effective, we need better cooperation in planning operations. The Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council must share assessments of the political, security, humanitarian and human rights dimensions of missions from the very outset. Working together early helps us ensure that the strategic concept — including operations, force generation, and mission cost — has the buy-in of all parties.

We support the AU's efforts to increase financial self-reliance and to build the African Union Peace Fund. We look forward to working with AU member States to identify non-trade mechanisms for greater self-financing. But any resolution with that goal in mind must hold member States accountable to their international obligations and commitments.

We welcome the AU's efforts to put in place effective mechanisms to respect human rights in all of its missions. Ensuring respect for human rights and accountability for those who violate those rights is essential, not just for African Union-United Nations cooperation, but to preserve the trust between troops and the communities they are supposed to protect. That will require the creation of rigorous procedures for the screening and selection of troops and police, followed by the training and monitoring of personnel. Violations and abuses must be reported and independently investigated. Perpetrators must be held accountable. On that, there will be no compromise.

We are encouraged by the prospect of more effective, self-sufficient, and African-led peace operations. We understand, however, that additional progress will take time. Therefore, before considering moving forward on any framework resolution with regard to financial support through the United Nations, we will look for implementation and concrete results from the AU's own benchmarks and timelines. It may therefore be premature for the Council to take action on any substantive resolution on this issue in 2017.

The men and women who plan and conduct peace operations are given a great responsibility. People in the most vulnerable of situations rely on them for their safety — often for their lives. It is essential that we get this right. It is worth taking the time to make sure that we get it right.

Again, we thank the Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson, as well as their organizations, for their commitment to advancing the AU-United Nations partnership and, through that, the peace and security of Africa and the world.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank Chef de Cabinet Viotti and Ambassador Chergui for their briefings. The document signed by the Secretary-General and the African Union Chairperson on 19 April is appropriately entitled the Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. We welcome the strong signal of cooperation and coordination that the Framework brings, and we support further efforts to strengthen the partnership on both sides. Each challenge to peace and security that we face today has a unique combination of underlying factors.

In Africa, we have many good examples of international, regional and subregional organizations coming together in varied ways to tackle them. In some instances, the United Nations is best placed to lead a response, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — where the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has played a critical role in protecting civilians. In others, the African Union has taken the lead — critically, in Somalia, where for 10 years the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has played a vital role in degrading the threat posed by Al-Shabaab. The bravery and sacrifice of AMISOM troops has created a security space conducive to political progress.

On other issues, the subregion has stepped up to find solutions, as we saw with the Economic Community of West African States in The Gambia and as we look to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to lead in South Sudan. In some cases, the solutions will evolve, as we saw in Mali and the Central African Republic, where initial responses by regional and subregional organizations then transitioned in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In Somalia, the United Nations provides vital logistical support to an African Union operation. That flexibility in our partnership is essential to ensuring the best response to crises.

In each case and as the Council set forth in resolution 2320 (2016), we should consider the comparative advantage of each institution to ensure the most appropriate and effective response is deployed to resolve conflict and achieve stability. In order to assess which solution is best for each situation, we must enhance our partnership. That means more joint analysis, more joint planning and more joint assessments to form a common understanding of crises and determine the optimal solution.

The recent work of both the United Nations and the African Union marks a new period in that partnership, and it is imperative that we find more and better ways of working together. The African Union's commitment to financing 25 per cent of the African Union peace support operations budget is a welcome development and Mr. Kaberuka and his team have made significant strides in developing a roadmap to achieve that goal by 2020. This work is a positive step towards greater African ownership of peace and security, and a deeper partnership with the United Nations.

We must continue to explore ways to make our joint efforts more systematic and we look forward to

discussing that issue with the African Union Peace and Security Council during our visit to Addis Ababa in September. We agree with the African Union report, that in response to some of the most serious threats to peace and security, the deployment of African Union peace support operations will be a key requirement and will once again demonstrate the African Union's comparative advantage to deploy where the United Nations cannot.

We should continue to look at how the United Nations can best support those missions in order to combine our strengths to bring about lasting solutions and peace on the African continent. That includes the further consideration of options to provide reliable and sustainable funding for operations but must also focus on how we conduct those operations. In parallel, therefore, we should examine joint standards for reporting, accountability and protection to ensure the highest standards and most robust oversight of missions to make them as effective as possible. Those issues will require further debate and further joint work. we look forward to engaging with all members of the Security Council to strengthen and develop our partnership.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by extending France's deepest sympathy to China following the incident that occurred in the east of the country earlier today.

I thank Ethiopia, Senegal and Egypt for convening today's important debate. I also thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General, and Mr. Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, for their very insightful briefings.

I would also like to warmly congratulate Secretary-General Guterres, Mr. Donald Kaberuka and their teams who worked on the report (S/2017/454) submitted pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016).

Resolution 2320 (2016) launched a process to achieve two complementary goals: first, to deepen the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on matters of peace and security; and secondly, to increase funding for African Union peace operations when they are mandated by the Security Council. The Secretary-General identifies the specific modalities that would ensure an ongoing and improved partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. We welcome and encourage the resolute commitment on the part of the Secretary-General to strengthen relations with the African Union, which he clearly demonstrated when he participated in the Summit of Heads of State held in January.

Mr. Kaberuka and his team submitted an excellent analysis of the status of African peace operations and put forward a programme of work to improve their existing framework and the way they are planned, conducted and financed. That analysis has already been deemed to be successful because it has brought together all of the member States of the African Union to work on project that would improve the continent's future.

France welcomes the momentum created by resolution 2320 (2016). The efforts underpinning that momentum must continue. Current developments illustrate how such efforts respond to the situation on the ground and meet a need. It is true that our African partners make increasing and more effective contributions to efforts to ensure peace and security in Africa. African peace operations offer an undeniable comparative advantage to United Nations peacekeeping operations. There is an increasing number of situations in which the partnership is already operational or will be required. We now have a historic opportunity to build a stronger, closer and more coherent partnership framework between the United Nations and the African Union, which can be activated and adapted to each situation as required.

I will keep my remarks brief because we will have a more in-depth discussion during the interactive dialogue to be held after this meeting. The message we would like to convey here today is that France welcomes the efforts under way and the momentum created. We therefore intend to play an active role in the Security Council and with the African Union and its member States in order to establish a new and innovative cooperation mechanism for peace and security.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We too extend our condolences to our Chinese colleagues in the light of the incident that occurred at a preschool in the east of the country. We extend our sympathy to the families of the victims and wish the injured a speedy recovery.

We thank the briefers for their comprehensive statements. We agree with the approach of Secretary-General António Guterres. It is important to develop and strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union and African subregional organizations. The potential for closer cooperation

exists and the challenges faced by both Africa and the international community dictate the need to pool efforts and harness the organizations' comparative advantages.

We welcome the efforts of our African partners in settling crises in Africa. We note that the African Union and other subregional organizations have stepped up their efforts and initiatives considerably in that sphere, including through the establishment of a continent-wide peace and security architecture. We are confident that in order to effectively overcome crises in Africa, we need an approach that brings together, above all, the leadership of Africans themselves to determine the paths to settling disputes, and effective international support for such efforts. We support the African solutions to African issues approach.

We would like to draw attention to the fact that cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union must be rooted in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and include key provisions such as the alignment of regional players' initiatives for the maintenance of peace and security with the purposes and principles of the Charter, while prioritizing peaceful dispute settlement, Security Council authorization for any coercive measures and reporting before the Council. We trust that the Secretary-General's proposed algorithms will fully take those issues into account.

Furthermore, it is important for a unique crisis solution to be tailored in each instance in a manner that reflects the specific situations of local communities. We believe that in most instances, regional actors are more familiar with the situations in areas within their purview. Yet, given the main responsibility of the Security Council — the maintenance of international peace and security — we do not believe that the Council can fully opt out of addressing such issues. They cannot be left solely to the discretion of African organizations, especially if we seek to apply all requisite measures.

It is important to enhance predictability, reliability and flexibility in financing African operations and joint missions. As a matter of principle, we do not object to considering the possible expansion of United Nations participation in such missions. We stand ready to engage in further constructive dialogue in that regard. However, we believe that regardless of the options chosen, it is critical to retain the current procedure followed by the United Nations in considering and approving relevant budget requet requests to ensure transparency and accountability in the allocation and disbursement of funds and to provide for United Nations staff participation in all planning stages and for the effective implementation of the goals set forth.

Furthermore, we note the importance of further study of the Secretary-General's ideas, with representatives of the African Union Commission. In that context, we must have a clear picture of the degree to which African partners are ready to strengthen cooperation, including financially and for peacekeeping and security. It is clear that enhanced cooperation between our organizations will inevitably entail greater regional ownership, which they must be fully willing to undertake.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we join with others in extending condolences to our Chinese colleagues.

We welcome today's briefing on an issue that is key to the work of the Security Council. We also thank Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Mr. Chergui and Mr. Kaberuka for their briefings.

Uruguay notes the development, over the past 15 years, of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping operations and of the vital role played by the African Union in responding to the challenges posed by armed conflicts on the continent. In that regard, my delegation would like to share some views on three specific issues, namely, the process of planning and establishing joint mandates for African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council; the financing of peace support operations; and the capacity-building of African Union staff deployed in those operations.

Close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the planning and establishment of joint peace support mandates is essential for ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of those operations. It is therefore especially important to continue with efforts to improve the joint work of both organizations throughout the life cycle of the missions, that is, from the initial assessment of the crisis and the joint strategic evaluation, to the launch of the mission, the joint assessments of mandate compliance and accountability.

The joint review carried out by the United Nations and the African Union revealed that the determination of the African Union to act and respond to difficult situations by deploying peace support operations has been hampered by a lack of capacity in key areas, including the lack of capacity in financing and support,

which are not always predictable and sustainable. Uruguay believes that the different financing models presented in the report (S/2017/454) offer viable alternatives to the use of voluntary contributions.

As a country that has actively participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations for many years, Uruguay attaches particular importance to the responsibility of troop- and police-contributing countries in their actions on the ground and in implementing the mandates. In that context, we stress that any United Nations force authorized by the Security Council, including an African Union peace support operation, must comply with the same standards as those required of United Nations peacekeeping staff in terms of capacity, performance, conduct and discipline, and accountability.

The joint review carried out by both organizations has made it abundantly clear that the African Union must continue to boost its ability to plan, finance, sustain and oversee its own missions if it is to be in a position comply with their mandates, to meet the expectations of its membership and partners, and to strengthen its partnership with the United Nations.

By the same token, Uruguay recognizes the efforts made by the African Union to finalize its human rights and conduct and discipline standards compliance frameworks in order to ensure that its peace support operations are carried out in accordance with international human rights law and humanitarian law standards and to thereby ensure oversight and accountability.

In conclusion, we also underscore that the African Union's development of those frameworks will bode well for the success of operations, will further strengthen its partnership with the United Nations and enhance the invaluable contribution that the African Union makes to peace and security on the continent.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this very timely and opportune briefing. I also want to thank Mr. Chergui, Mr. Kaberuka and Chef de Cabinet, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for their briefings.

The joint United Nations-African Union framework signed on 19 April, the report of the Secretary-General on the joint United Nations-African Union review of mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace operations authorized by the Council (see S/2016/809) and the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the same theme should mark the beginning of a new strengthened partnership between the two organizations. Italy fully supports the mechanism described in the report of the Secretary-General for a joint planning and mandating of African Union (AU) peace operations, which preserves the prerogatives of the Security Council but at the same time provides for African ownership and paves the way for African solutions to African problems.

With regard to financing, the different options to provide financial support envisaged in the report (S/2017/454) of the Secretary-General can be chosen on a case by case basis. Already in 2008, the report (see S/2008/2013) prepared by the panel of experts chaired by former Prime Minister Romano Prodi called for predictable and sustainable financial support to United Nations-approved African Union peacekeeping missions. We are thereofre fully in favour of exploring the use of assessed contributions, provided, of course, that the appropriate set of requirements in terms of troop quality, training, equipment and high accountability standards are met.

In that respect, we welcome the commitment taken by the African Union Heads of State and Government, at the Kigali Summit in July 2016, to contribute 25 per cent of the costs of African Union peace support operations, as reaffirmed in the report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. It is a commitment that will increase significantly the contribution of African States to peace operations. Enhanced strategic cooperation with the African Union is therefore one of the ways leading to smart and cost-effective peace operations and a fundamental element, in our view, of the reform of the peace and security architecture envisaged by Secretary-General Guterres.

As others have said, African Union peace operations have comparative advantages in terms of flexibility, rapid deployment in challenging environments and the capacity to perform robust mandate tasks, such as peace enforcement and counter-terrorism, that United Nations peacekeeping operations cannot perform. We already have some examples of fields of action where African Union-United Nations cooperation has been positively tested, such as in Somalia with the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia and in Darfur with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I would like also to recall the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, whose revitalization we deem essential as a preventive tool for the entire region, and the recent creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel force, a mission that can have a crucial impact on security in the region in cooperation with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and with the European Union missions active in the area — the European Union Training Mission in Mali, the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Mali, EUCAP Sahel Niger. I would also like to recall the strong European support for this force.

Concerning adherence to United Nations rules and standards, we agree that it is paramount to secure high standards of accountability and conduct and discipline for the United Nations-mandated peace operations undertaken by African Union. We welcome the engagement stated in the AU Commission Chairperson's report to strengthen African Union human rights due diligence capabilities, including preventing and combating sexual exploitation and abuse in African Union-led peace operations. In that respect, we think training is key, in particular predeployment and mandate-oriented training. Allow me to recall that Italy has a strong record in the training of national, military and police personnel for peace operations. Respect for human rights, the protection of civilians and a gender perspective are embedded in our national military training curriculums.

We stand ready to strengthen our engagement in the capacity-building of the police and military units of Member States willing to contribute to African Union missions and to help the United Nations devise new training instruments and capacities in support of specific African needs.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me also begin by extending our deepest condolences to our Chinese friends for their tragedy at the nursery this morning. Our thoughts are with those affected.

I would also like to begin by extending my thanks to the briefers this morning — Ambassador Chergui, Mr. Kaberuka and Chef de Cabinet Viotti — for their very thoughtful and insightful briefings. I should also like to thank my colleagues from Senegal, Egypt and Ethiopia for having called for this timely meeting.

Sweden is a long-standing supporter of an enhanced strategic partnership between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in Africa. The reasons for this commitment are many. Regional actors have a better understanding of the issues at stake on the ground; they are often more invested, and they carry credibility at local levels. The African Union (AU) and its regional partners can at times undertake operations in working environments in which the United Nations cannot and can often deploy quickly.

We therefore very much welcome the current momentum and energy around the United Nations-African Union partnership agenda. The first-ever United Nations-AU summit just a few weeks ago and the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed on that occasion represent very positive developments.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016) (S/2017/454). We welcome the thorough work that underpins this report, and I want to pay particular tribute to the joint nature of the efforts that have characterized its drafting.

We now have concrete proposals and options for closer cooperation with the AU, including the process for mandating AU peace-support operations. This will no doubt help us move forward towards ensuring more predictable collaboration and accountability. We also thank the African Union for providing us with an update on the progress on its side, including the communiqué from the AU Peace and Security Council meeting of 30 May. In particular, we welcome updates on what has been done to strengthen work within the realm of human rights and conduct and discipline, as well as plans for addressing the remaining gaps.

We commend once again the AU summit's bold decision on financing the African Union in an effort to secure financing for peace in Africa, in line with the recommendations made by President Kagame in his report on AU reform.

We very much recognize the need for flexible, predictable and sustainable funding of AU peace operations, and we welcome the proposals pertaining to financing contained in the report of the Secretary-General. We look forward to continued discussions in the Council on the various options and models, including access to assessed United Nations contributions. Our planned visit to Addis Ababa in September for the annual consultations with the AU Peace and Security Council would be an excellent opportunity to discuss

this matter further. We believe that the Peace Fund will be a robust mechanism for cooperation and partnership. We will consider channelling Swedish financial support to the Peace Fund once it has been operationalized.

Moving forward on this agenda will require substantial and sustained political investment from the Security Council. While we are encouraged by the commitment by the Secretary-General as well as by the increased structure for cooperation at the Secretariat level, it must now be matched by political engagement from us as members of the Council. Let us utilize and build upon the momentum we have.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to join others in expressing our deepest condolences to our Chinese colleagues and friends on the tragedy that took place in the kindergarten. Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this briefing. I would also like to welcome the briefers and to thank the Secretary-General for his personal dedication to strengthening the United Nations-African Union (AU) partnership.

It is evident that over the past decade, especially in recent years, the role of the relevant regional arrangements in promoting peace and security has only expanded. The engagement of the Economic Community of West African States in the Gambian post-electoral crisis is the most recent case in point. The decision of the interested countries on the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) force represents yet another practical regional action.

The United Nations should continue working on building and enhancing its strategic partnership with regional and subregional organizations on the African continent, working in concert with them and using the competitive advantages of each actor in peacekeeping and conflict management. In this light we are encouraged by the recent increased efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and the AU, particularly the signing the joint United Nations-AU framework for enhancing partnership in peace and security. Ukraine looks forward to translating this document into reality.

Let me highlight several issues of the current United Nations-AU cooperation that are worth considering in the light of the relevant report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/454).

First, and we have to be honest with ourselves, the United Nations has yet to succeed in taking timely and effective preventive measures in response to situations of tension that could possibly erupt into full-scale conflicts or where the civilian population is endangered and urgently requires protection. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the African Union, which should continue to act as a first responder to crises, with the authorization of the Security Council.

Under such circumstances, it is important to continue to make efforts to eliminate the shortcomings of the AU peace support operations, in particular the capability gaps in connection with uniformed personnel and equipment. We believe that ensuring deployment, readiness and increased performance requires collective and coordinated actions by both the United Nations and the African Union.

Secondly, it is crucial to ensure sustainable and predictable financing of the AU operations authorized by the Council. In this respect, the proposals presented in the Secretary-General's report give the Council and the General Assembly a range a viable options for consideration. Given the complexity of the peacekeeping endeavour, we are convinced that there can be no single approach that will fit all situations and missions. We therefore support preserving a maximum degree of flexibility in considering this issue for every single mission.

Thirdly, it is well known that taking military measures to counter terrorism is the primary responsibility of national Governments and the relevant regional arrangements. The United Nations should therefore continue to provide the necessary advice and expertise in support of the relevant regional endeavours, including the aforementioned G-5 Sahel force. It is also important to ensure proper coordination among United Nations missions and such initiatives in order to avoid any overlap.

Last but not least, in keeping with the people-centered approach to United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, we believe that the protection of civilians is a decisive factor for the success of the AU operations endorsed by the Council. It is clear also that there can be no peace without human rights. Thus this component should become an indispensable element of all AU operations authorized by the Security Council, with proper adherence to the United Nations human rights due-diligence policy.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): First, on behalf of the delegation of Kazakhstan, may I offer our sincerest condolences to our Chinese colleagues in connection with the tragedy in Jiangsu province and extend our sympathy to the families of the victims.

Kazakhstan expresses its appreciation to the Bolivian presidency for having convened this meeting as well as to our briefers, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Chergui; the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund, Mr. Kaberuka; and the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Viotti, for their insights on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU).

My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

Kazakhstan, as an observer of the African Union, is deeply committed to consolidating a comprehensive United Nations-AU partnership on issues of peace and security in Africa. The first United Nations-AU annual conference, on 19 April, with the participation of Secretary-General Guterres and AU Commission Chair Mahamat, has been a milestone in enhancing the United Nations-AU strategic partnership.

Despite the significant progress made, more could be achieved in terms of United Nations-AU cooperation through well-formulated common strategic objectives and a clear division of responsibilities premised on shared assessments. These would mutually reinforce and complement the actions of the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council.

Lessons learned and best practices should be shared regularly through more frequent Secretariat-to-secretariat exchanges so as to prevent redundancies in and duplication of their tasks.

The aspirations for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Secretary-General's new agenda for peace, as well as Africa's Agenda 2063 and the African Union (AU) project Silencing the Guns by 2020, which aims to achieve a conflict-free continent by that date, are significant. They can be achieved through greater military, diplomatic and development partnerships, as well as North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. That is critical for actions by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union and for their respective resolutions.

Early warning signals, timely United Nations-AU preventive diplomacy, mediation to defuse potential crisis situations, and rapid response teams will achieve much. That falls within Kazakhstan's purview and its proposal for a conflict-free world by the United Nations centenary, in 2045.

We share the view that regional actors, which are assuming greater ownership of development in their respective regions, have a deeper understanding of the dynamics and root causes of conflict, and contribute immeasurably to global peace, security and development.

Without sufficient financial and capacity-building support to African Union, the ability to deliver will not match the expected aspirations and determinations. The new phase of the United Nations-AU partnership should consider enhanced support for AU peace support operations, in accordance with the resolution 2320 (2016).

Hybrid missions of the United Nations and the AU, or local regional forces have proven to be more effective due to the familiarity of African soldiers with their own terrain, local conditions and tactics of armed groups. Good examples include the capacity of the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram, and the African Union Mission in Somalia, which is fighting Al-Shabaab in that country. Funding AU forces is therefore critical.

We also see fine examples of how, with the best support of the African Union, several groups of neighbouring countries play important roles. That includes the Group of Five Sahel — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger— member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and countries of the Economic Community of West African States, which averted the presidential crisis in The Gambia.

Kazakhstan welcomes the decision of African Union to extend the mandate of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army for another 12 months, until 22 May 2018, to strengthen coordination mechanisms for cross-border operations.

Finally, Kazakhstan will do its utmost to strengthen United Nations-AU cooperation to respond effectively to emerging threats in the African region and beyond.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I would also like to join previous speakers and express our condolences to the

people of China with respect to the tragic incident in the kindergarten in Jiangsu, in the eastern part of China.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) on peace and security, which is particularly timely after the unanimous adoption of resolution 2320 (2016), last November. I also thank Ms. Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Mr. Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Mr. Kaberuka, AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, for their effective briefings.

Japan takes note of the reports from both the Secretary-General (S/2017/454) and the AU. They provide a useful basis for exploring our expanded partnership, as well as the particular tools that AU peace support operations offer for the maintenance of peace and security.

A major point that emerges from both reports is the AU's comparative advantage in deploying as a first responder and in challenging environments. Further discussion is needed both at the Council and within the AU on the most effective role for peace support operations, particularly on the division of labour. Green and Blue Helmets have different roles, and it may not be efficient to focus on enabling peace support operations to replicate multidimensional United Nations tasks.

The Secretary-General's report outlines a new model of joint financing of a jointly developed budget, as well as a joint assessment and planning process. We also see similar proposals in the AU report. We believe that greater clarity is needed on those models from the AU, with support from the United Nations Secretariat as necessary, particularly with regard to joint budgeting and accountability. We underline the Chef de Cabinet's point on the crucial role of the General Assembly on financial matters.

We should avoid peace support operations discussions becoming overly centred on their financial aspects. Financing alone cannot solve challenges facing peace support operations, given the limited personnel to carry out tasks, including at the AU Peace and Security Department.

In order to deepen our understanding of the current situation, we would like to hear more about ongoing efforts and political commitment on the implementation of the Kigali decision regarding the AU Peace Fund during the informal interactive dialogue following this meeting.

Japan believes that the United Nations-AU partnership is about empowering African States and their peoples to play an active role in their own security. Japan, both as a Council member and as a major contributor to the United Nations peacekeeping budget, is very pleased to join discussions on continued collaboration that employs the comparative advantages of both organizations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

At the outset, Bolivia joins in the expressions of condolences with the respect to the tragic incident that took place in China. Our solidarity and thoughts are with the families of the victims. We wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

Bolivia would like to thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Mr. Chergui, and the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, for their briefings. Our gratitude also goes to the delegations of Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal for having taken the initiative to convene this meeting.

Bolivia pays tribute to the work of the President of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the outcome of the first annual African Union-United Nations conference, which took place in April. We encourage its commitment to strengthen dialogue and improve cooperation and coordination mechanisms through common objectives. The African Union has responded in a timely way to the new threats to peace and security in Africa. Clear examples of this fact are the 2007 deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia, the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, as well as the backing provided to the Lake Chad Basin Commission as they set up the Multinational Joint Task Force to fight Boko Haram.

Some of the achievements that I referred to have allowed the United Nations the African Union to forge a strategic partnership that, over the past 15 years, has incorporated innovative and fresh ways of working, particularly when it comes to peace operations. Peace operations deployed by the United Nations in Africa are

a key instrument in the ongoing quest for the embedding of peace and security on a permanent basis in those countries that currently face serious political and social crises. They are also a useful tool when dealing with threats such as humanitarian crises and terrorism.

Bolivia would like to underscore the rising level of strategic partnership between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Both organs are committed to developing a structured and balanced relationship while also strengthening partnership through mutual support and consistent technical support, with respect to political issues as well as peacekeeping operations. We hope that the meeting scheduled for September will be successful.

The Council stressed that joint consultative analysis and planning with the United Nations are crucial in formulating joint recommendations on the reach of mission resources. Resolution 2320 (2016) was adopted to that end, by which the Security Council expressed its willingness to consider options in response to the African Union's own proposal to finance 25 per cent of the cost of such operations by 2020. Such a mobilization of resources would make a significant contribution to the African Union peace and security programme. We urge donor countries and the international community in general to continue to contribute actively and to fulfil the commitments they have undertaken in the framework of cooperation and under resolution 2320 (2016).

Bolivia believes that the success of peacekeeping operations depends on close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, and on the role that has been conferred, inter alia, on women in such processes. We stress the need for both organizations to ensure that women and the gender perspective are fully integrated into all activities related to peace and security.

Finally, Bolivia believes it important to give the African Union a more proactive role in taking its own decisions on issues of concern to it, in full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all its members. It is also essential to respect the principle of African solutions for African problems if we are to succeed in our common endeavours.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7972

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 June 2017

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 7972nd (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 June 2017, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 15 June 2017, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7972nd meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

"The President invited Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Wane.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Wane and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7973

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7973rd meeting
Thursday, 15 June 2017, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 May from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/469)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-17144 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Expression of sympathy for the victims of terrorism in Kabul

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my heartfelt condolences about the loss of life in an attack today in Kabul. I am sure that I speak on behalf of all members of the Security Council in expressing our condemnation of these acts, our condolences to the families of the victims, our wishes for a rapid recovery for the wounded and our solidarity with the people and Government of Afghanistan.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 May from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/469)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/469, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 May 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nakamitsu.

Ms. Nakamitsu: I thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Security Council once again for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. As before, I will also provide them with an update on the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Mr. Mulet, Head of the JIM Leadership Panel, will join me at next month's briefing.

I will first turn to the progress related to resolution 2118 (2013) and the elimination of Syria's declared chemical weapons programme. Since my last briefing (see S/PV.7946), I was able to meet in person with the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to discuss matters related to this file and to continue the good and constructive engagement that has been established. In addition, the Director General, Mr. Mulet and I spoke by phone yesterday, in anticipation of the briefing.

I have also spoken with the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and have now met with most members of the Council. All these discussions have allowed me to deepen my understanding of this complex and challenging portfolio.

Although there is little new to report since my last briefing on 23 May, there have been small changes and, I am pleased to note, some progress. The Secretary-General's last letter noted the unchanged situation with regard to remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities. As members recall, one hangar remained to be destroyed and the OPCW Technical Secretariat had yet to verify the condition of two aboveground stationary facilities. The lack of progress in this regard was due to the prevailing security situation, which precluded safe access to these sites. On 6 June, the remaining aircraft hangar was destroyed. The destruction was observed by an OPCW team. As of yet, however, there is no change to the lack of safe access to the site of the two above-ground stationary facilities.

The long-standing issues related to Syria's declaration and subsequent amendments also remain. Plans for a fourth round of high-level consultations are continuing, but as yet no new dates have been set. The last such consultations took place a year ago, in June 2016. The Secretary-General continues to urge cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW to resolve these issues in order for the OPCW to be in a position to verify that activities are in accordance with the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and consistent with the information provided in declarations. This in turn will allow the international community to have full confidence in the same.

In November 2016, the OPCW Executive Council decided that the OPCW would conduct inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. The decision also called upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to provide full and unfettered access to the

Centre. The first inspections were duly carried out from 26 February to 5 March. Four samples were taken at the Centre — two from each facility. The results of the sample analysis indicated that there were no unscheduled chemicals present in the samples. The OPCW is planning a second inspection to take place in the second half of this year.

I am informed by the OPCW that the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic continues investigations into the allegation of the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. Last month, a status update on this investigation was transmitted by the OPCW Director General to the Secretary-General and subsequently circulated to the Security Council. I am further informed that the OPCW Fact-finding Mission team recently visited Damascus and may do so again. In addition, planning is still under way for the deployment of a team to the site of the incident. As always, any such deployment will depend upon the most stringent security assurances for the OPCW team. The OPCW was not able to say with certainty when the Fact-finding Mission team will be able to submit its conclusions on this incident, only that it will do so when it considers that it has sufficient information and evidence.

With the appointment of Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins, the Leadership Panel of the JIM is now complete. Ms. Cheng-Hopkins had a long and distinguished career at the United Nations, including most recently as the head of the Peacebuilding Support Office. She joins Mr. Mulet and Mr. Stefan Mogl and will be advising the Panel on political matters.

As stated in the Secretary-General's most recent letter to the Security Council (S/2017/469) following its assessment of the report of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission, the JIM has started an in-depth investigation into the 16 September 2016 incident in Umm Hawsh. The Council will recall that the OPCW report concluded that blood sample analyses of two female casualties reported to have been involved in the alleged attack indicated exposure to sulphur mustard, as did a munition that was also reported to be connected to the incident.

The JIM is also preliminarily assessing the status update report of the Fact-finding Mission, and other available material, on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons at Khan Shaykhun, to which I referred earlier. The Leadership Panel expects to make a decision on conducting an in-depth investigation into this incident upon receipt of the Mission's final report.

As I noted at the outset, the smooth working relationship between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the JIM has continued. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continues to work to support and facilitate the work of the JIM, while fully respecting its independence.

Both Mr. Mulet and I continue to urge the members of the Security Council to avoid politicizing this issue. In addition, as the Secretary-General states in his most recent letter to the Security Council, the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only horrific in its own right, but also profoundly damaging to the international community's confidence in its non-proliferation architecture. This is to the detriment of all of us. We have, collectively, worked to create regimes for disarmament and non-proliferation in order that our security will be enhanced. If we, collectively, permit the erosion of those regimes, so too will our security be eroded.

Nearly 100 years ago, the 1925 Geneva Protocol stated that

> "the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world".

Nearly 100 years later, we must continue not only to speak but to act in accordance with that view. We cannot go backwards. The Chemical Weapons Convention calls upon us "to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons". Such use remains wholly indefensible and is a threat to international peace and security. Those responsible for their use must be held accountable. Many things have changed in the years since 1925; this view of chemical weapons should not be one of them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too thank Ms. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The use of chemical weapons, wherever it may take place, is a serious threat to international peace and security, as well as a grave violation of international

law. Uruguay therefore condemns in the most emphatic terms any use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian conflict. These actions constitute war crimes, and those responsible for these crimes must be brought to justice.

We reiterate that until the entire Syrian chemical arsenal, declared or not, has been destroyed or safeguarded, we will not be able to close definitively the dossier on Syria's chemical weapons in the Security Council. In that vein, we encourage the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to clarify all omissions and discrepancies in the initial declaration. We also note the latest monthly report of the Director General of the OPCW, stating that it has received the documents requested from Syria to clarify and resolve all pending cases related to the initial Syrian declaration, and that high-level consultations on the matter will resume shortly.

Uruguay calls for a continued search for a consensus that will make it possible to overcome differences among members of the Council and to prevent new incidents of chemical-weapons use in Syria, as well as for the combat against the impunity of those responsible for these atrocities. In the months to come, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) will have to determine those responsible so that the Security Council can finally take action in this regard, action which has been delayed far too often.

Uruguay reiterates its full support for the serious and impartial work of the JIM, and we trust in the leadership and demonstrated experience of Mr. Edmond Mulet, Head of the independent panel of the Mechanism, so that in the coming months the authorship of these incidents and others investigated during the second year of the mandate given by the Council can be established.

In conclusion, we reiterate our call on all members of the Council to overcome our internal differences so that we can find a political solution that will put an end to the violence, make it possible to consolidate a ceasefire, ensure the protection of civilians and give new hope to the hundreds of thousands of victims that the authors of the serious crimes committed in Syria will be brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.